THE WELL-BEING OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS IN RURAL AREAS: BRIDGING THE MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

EDITED BY: Philomena De Lima, Belinda Leach, David Radford and Seema Arora-Jonsson

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Topic Editors:
Philomena De Lima, University of the Highlands and Islands, United Kingdom
Belinda Leach, University of Guelph, Canada
David Radford, University of South Australia, Australia
Seema Arora-Jonsson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

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Editorial: The Well-being of International Migrants in Rural Areas: Bridging the Migration-Development Nexus

Philomena de Lima [1]*, Belinda Leach [2], David Radford [3] and Seema Arora-Jonsson [4]

[1] *University of the Highlands and Islands-Inverness College, Scotland, United Kingdom,* [2] *University of Guelph, Guelph, ON, Canada,* [3] *University of South Australia, Adelaide, SA, Australia,* [4] *Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden*

Editorial of the Research Topics

The Well-being of International Migrants in Rural Areas: Bridging the Migration-Development Nexus

INTRODUCTION

The presence of international migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in rural regions of Europe, North America and Australia has received growing attention as a means of facilitating development and the sustainability of rural regions and communities. Interventions to attract, recruit and retain international labor migrants and concerns about shortages of labor and skills in the context of aging populations and high levels of outmigration of the young and economically active in rural areas, have received increased research attention (Garela et al., 2018; de Lima and Carvajal, 2019; Haugen, 2019).

The debate and evidence on the contribution of migration to economic and social development in rural regions and elsewhere has evolved over time, and is ambivalent, messy and uncertain (Bastia, and Skeldon, 2021). As the articles in this issue reveal, migration to rural areas is imbricated in the dynamics of geopolitics and power hierarchies and changing national socio-cultural, economic and political circumstances. This development-migration nexus provides an important lens to highlight the multilayered relationship between the two, giving rise to both positive and negative impacts (Raghuram, 2009, 2020). The privileging of receiving countries' perspectives and instrumental arguments for recruiting transnational migrants are prominent in the academic and policy literature in rural regions of Europe, North America and Australia. National and EU policy discourses and policies on rural development often privilege notions of "unchanging" white rural areas which can counter policies on migration and "integration," thus undermining substantive "integration" efforts in relation to migrants in receiving communities (Arora-Jonsson, 2017). With few exceptions (e.g. Preibisch and Hennebry, 2011; Preibisch, 2012; Bolokan, 2020; Dabrowska-Miciula and de Lima, 2020) there is a dearth of theoretical and empirical literature exploring migrants' wellbeing and their human rights within rural development discourses, a reflection of the presence of disciplinary silos in relation to migration, "development" including rural development, and wellbeing.

The overall aim of this special issue is to explore, illuminate and develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between migration, rural development, and the wellbeing of migrants, drawing on multiple perspectives, experiences, and methods in different national contexts. Taken together the papers demonstrate the importance of drawing on diverse theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches and of challenging persistent binaries (e.g. internal and international migration; sending and receiving countries) as well as exploring the experiences of different categories of migrants including refugees. The special issue also highlights a plurality of issues and experiences that form part of wider discourses associated with migration and development in rural areas, such as the economic contribution of migrants to host and home regions, the exploitation of temporary migrant workers in agriculture (and increasingly in other sectors as well) and the broad challenges of formulating ethical and practical policies. It also draws attention to novel areas of research inquiry. Here, we highlight a selection of these relatively underexplored issues discussed by the contributors which merit further discussion.

NAVIGATING MIGRANT LIFE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

The ways in which migrants become a part of local communities operate through a range of "domains" that include employment, housing, education and health, but also rights and citizenship, safety and stability, and language and cultural knowledge (Ager and Strong, 2008). It is clear in the papers by Boese and Moran, Bryan, Dauphinais, et al., Herslund and Paulgaard, and Sireni et al. that migrant wellbeing and their contributions to local communities are closely linked to positive social connections between migrants and local residents, as well as the context in which migration occurs and migrant aspirations and their imaginings of "rural places" (Papadopoulos and Fratsea). For example, Glorius et al. draw on acculturation literature to argue that a pre-requisite for successful integration and wellbeing for migrants in the long term has much to do with the quality and quantity of migrants' social contacts, which they suggest is shaped by the particular socio-spatial characteristics (e.g. limited cultural diversity and stereotyping) of rural communities. Experiences of social acceptance through positive contact support a positive integration trajectory leading to stronger development outcomes for the rural localities themselves, whereas negative contact can lead to reduced relational engagement.

In the prevailing discourses on the migration-development nexus, transnational migrants are often "portrayed as heroic agents of development" (Glick Schiller, 2020), used to support arguments about "inclusive growth" and development leading to what is promoted as "win-win" for nation states in destination and countries of origin. In contrast, considering the nexus between migration, development, and wellbeing, Boese and Moran draw attention to migrants' own development needs, rather than only focusing on the economic development of rural communities. They pose the question: what kind of development benefits migrants? In a parallel approach Dauphinais, et al.,

explore the role of mediating organizations, particularly employers, on the wellbeing and sense of acceptance and integration of international migrants in rural communities. Their research indicates that migrant dissatisfaction with living in rural Canada increases over time. They link this dissatisfaction to migrants' negative experiences of employment and the government's neo-liberal policies which focus on immigration as an economic endeavor rather than including a humanitarian element that focuses on migrants' wellbeing.

MATERIAL AND PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF RURAL AREAS

Herslund and Paulgaard's contribution draws on the concept of "phenomenology of practices" (Simonsen, 2007), which emphasizes the bodily and sensory experiences of daily life that can spur feelings of "orientation" or "disorientation" in rural areas. Building on Ingold's work (Ingold, 2010) on the importance of weather, they explore the ways in which rural spaces—characterized by remoteness, visually unfamiliar landscapes, darkness, cold and windy climate and sparse populations—shape bodily experiences and affective relationships of migrant bodies to that of others. The disorientation experienced by migrants because of factors associated with specific rural locations is countered by reorientating their activities through an emphasis on prioritizing relationships with fellow refugees and meaningful voluntary activities that achieve change.

Research in Europe (Askins, 2009; Arora-Jonsson and Ågren, 2019) has indicated how conceptualizations of nature and the environment are crucial in migrant-local relations in rural areas, especially as rural environments are imbricated in defining selective national identities/ethnicities as "white" spaces, which exclude migrants from these spaces or evoke feelings of being in the wrong place (see also Agyeman, 1990). Bolokan's emphasis on the importance of understanding migrants' engagement in the agricultural sector, encompassing "caring for and with humans, animals, plants and the soil" makes an important contribution to understanding the entanglements of migration in environmental relations. The customary focus on the "integration" of migrants in rural communities has paid limited attention to the lived and bodily experiences (including the visibility of different bodies) of migrants that is crucial for the wellbeing of themselves and the communities in which they settle, as well as for rural development.

A TRANSNATIONAL APPROACH TO WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT BEYOND DESTINATION COUNTRIES

Scholarship and policy makers on migrants to rural areas continue to be locked into a methodological national framework by focusing attention on movers and their integration into new communities. There is far less consideration of their continuing relationships with those left behind and the impact of these shifting relationships on households and communities

in the countries and places of origin. This gap persists despite the important theorizing on transnational ties (Glick Schiller, and Faist, 2010; Çaglar and Glick Schiller, 2018) and on translocality (Hedberg and do Carmo, 2012; Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013). Both have significant implications for the relational understanding of place—rural and urban—facilitated by mobilities as well as the relationships between differently mobile people (Brickell, 2011). Papadopoulos and Fratsea examine how mobilities differentially benefit the development and wellbeing of rural areas and of locals (non-movers) and migrants (movers) in rural areas. They argue for the need to strengthen and support the role of internal and international migrants as positive agents of change for rural areas. This highlights the importance of further research that moves away from binary conceptualizations of place as well as of bounded categorizations of migrants prevalent in migration and rural development research to enhance understandings of how places can be mobilized and will change for all residents—movers and non-movers.

In a similar vein, Sireni et al. focus on North Karelia, a rural region close to the Finnish-Russian border. They examine the agency of Russian immigrant women in contributing to the resilience and wellbeing of the entire region, which they argue is invisible in public discourses. Analyzing regional newspaper accounts and interviews with Russian female immigrants to North Karelia, they find narrow instrumental views of migrants as addressing labor shortages. Their research highlights the women's own emphasis on the roles they play as "agents of development" by mobilizing their border proximity, translocal connections and ethno-cultural capital as resources to facilitate their engagement as contributors to the vitality of both sides of the border.

UNEQUAL RELATIONS: GLOBAL, REGIONAL, RURAL AND URBAN

Labor migration in rural areas, especially forms of temporary labor, is rooted in unequal economic and political relations: globally between countries exporting labor and the destination countries, between rural and urban areas within countries and internally in receiving societies where exploitation is endemic (Preibisch, 2012; Beatson et al., 2017). Bolokan argues for a wholistic approach in understanding Moldovan rural care chains in the context of the agricultural sector. Framing her paper within a critical political economy perspective, she draws on a "decolonial life course" approach that situates people's life courses within local and global power relations that reveal colonial continuities. She follows the movement of migrants between countries to explore the consequences of their "hypermobility" for the places, relationships, households, and communities of those who have migrated and those who are left behind. Bolokan argues that rural care chains are embedded in global networks which have both local place and personal consequences in countries of origin, that are not always positive for individuals and households. This is an area of research that has been generally underexplored in rural migration literature.

Bryan also addresses the underlying inequality of global labor regimes that are supported by government actions of both sending and receiving nations. Migrant workers are often caught in between and are left to navigate their own sense of wellbeing (emotional, physical, mental, material) within the precarity of their temporary migration status while at the same time aiding regional or national development goals. Bryan argues that migrant "self-management" of both their personal and non-migrant family wellbeing, often neglected in research, can end in the relative security of permanent residency but does not take away from the precarity of the process that largely benefits employers and local development while reinforcing the "individualization of neo-liberal wellness".

DECENTRING THE "HERE AND THERE" APPROACH

The "here" and "there" in the lives of migrants applies to those who move internally as much as internationally, an area with potential for further consideration. This is raised by Murray et al. who give particular attention to local place, household and community effects by focusing on inter-provincial migration in Canada. They point to the difficulties faced by women whose partners leave to work elsewhere in Canada, linked to the dynamics of rural communities where everyone knows each other, where people are judged whether they leave or stay, and migrant partners assume that life in the "home" community is easier for the person who does not move. Murray et al. suggest a kind of de-integration of people, a process of growing exclusion of those perceived to be less connected to home communities because they return only intermittently or because their focus is seen to be on family members living away. The academic and policy binary distinctions between internal and international migrants situated against the lived practices of mobile workers across and within national and regional borders contribute to a complex spatial politics relatively unexplored in migration scholarship (Vullnetari, 2020).

POSSIBILITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The breadth of papers in this special issue covers a wide range of issues in relation to wellbeing and development in rural communities. The papers also point to areas that require further scholarly engagement. This includes explicit critical engagement with "rural development" and theories of development in relation to migration, in particular how rural development is conceptualized, applied and measured. The assumptions underlying the concept/terms in relation to wellbeing and development used in the papers in this special issue call for a deeper exploration that would allow for a better understanding of the actual contribution of migration to rural development, which remains unclear.

A number of contributions departed from community-based studies, vital for understanding the migration-development and wellbeing nexus. However, a limitation of small scale, short term/one off projects makes it difficult to address issues such

as development outcomes and wellbeing which need longer time frames. The contributions of Bolokan, Murray et al. and Papadopoulos and Fratsea highlight a potential for scholarship of internal and international migration across different scales and groups.

There is a need for approaches that enhance our understanding of the specificities related to internal and international migration embedded as they are within the global political economy and migration system (including its governance), and which are also simultaneously shaped by their respective spatialities, histories and geo-politics. Bolokan's extension of the concept of care in agriculture to encompass animals, plants and soil, the consequences of migration for sending societies and the utilization of life course decolonial methods plugs a potential gap in migration scholarship which merits further consideration. This calls for research that engages in longitudinal and/or broader research methodologies such as in-depth, long term "whole community" studies that show how places, people (migrants, long term residents, etc.) and communities change over time. Another relatively unexplored area for research on the diversity of migrants to rural areas could compare and contrast their lived experiences in relation to wellbeing and development that takes account of

intersectional differences such as gender, education, ethnicity /race, social class and so on, and importantly how the material environment and conceptions of nature itself are a part of migration experiences.

Lastly, a major contribution of several of the essays in this special issue has been to move beyond a "receiving" society bias, to focus on the full experiences of migrants, such as their transnational and multinational networks of family and others across their life course. Future research would do well to attend to these complex spatial and temporal dimensions of the migration experience as they address the nexus between international migration, wellbeing and development in rural communities.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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Is Social Contact With the Resident Population a Prerequisite of Well-Being and Place Attachment? The Case of Refugees in Rural Regions of Germany

Birgit Glorius[1]*, Stefan Kordel[2], Tobias Weidinger[2], Miriam Bürer[1], Hanne Schneider[1] and David Spenger[2]

[1] *Chair of Human Geography With Focus on European Migration Research, Institute for European Studies and History, Chemnitz University of Technology, Chemnitz, Germany,* [2] *Department Geography and Geoscience, Institute for Geography, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Erlangen, Germany*

Due to dispersal policies applied in many European countries, such as Germany, rural regions are important arrival regions for asylum seekers and refugees. For German policy makers, who have faced a large number of immigrants since 2015, it is crucial that asylum seekers and refugees stay in those rural regions and benefit the development of those areas. This paper addresses the quality and quantity of social contact between refugees and resident populations as a prerequisite for integration and long-term migration-development effects from a social geographical perspective. Drawing from survey data and qualitative interviews, we examine expectations, perceptions and experiences of everyday encounters and social relationships in neighborhoods in small rural towns and villages from the perspective of both local residents and refugees. Our results support arguments from research literature for faster social inclusion in rural areas due to greater nearness, but also obstacles toward the integration of foreigners due to a higher homogeneity of rural neighborhoods and only few experiences of positive everyday contact with foreigners among rural residents. The interviewed refugees display a high level of reflexivity regarding their new neighborhood and how they might be seen by rural residents. Their experiences encompass various forms of social relationships, while social bridges are crucial, ranging from serendipitous encounters and functional interactions to connections based on mutual interest around family issues or cultural aspects. Openness and tolerance from at least some parts of the local population can help immigrants to feel at home, and support staying aspirations, while simultaneously evoking wider social change. A peculiarity of rural areas is the intersectionality with further challenges related to structural changes, encompassing, for instance, socio-demographic and economic restructuring. However, social interactions and opportunities for encounters are only one factor in the development of long-term settlement. More in-depth research is needed to consider the interrelations of both structural contexts and complex and changing needs for personal development in the future, also from an intergenerational perspective.

Keywords: integration, social contact, well-being, place attachment, neighborhood, refugees, rural regions

INTRODUCTION

In 2015 and 2016 there was an unprecedented rise in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Germany, which presented a challenge for the reception system and required strong efforts for long-term integration. While rural regions are usually not in the primary focus of immigrants, they host a considerable share of the world's refugee population. This is mostly due to state distribution mechanisms meant to share the burden of reception and integration, such as the quota system "Königsteiner Schlüssel" applied in Germany. Thus, of the 1.8 million people who sought asylum in Germany between 2013 and 2018 (Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat, 2020), roughly 43% today live in rural regions (own calculations, based on the typology provided by Küpper, 2016). In the public debate accompanying the allocation process, it was argued that rural regions could benefit from the surplus population, as those mostly young and partly well-educated migrants could help to overcome the effects of demographic aging and labor shortages, notably in those rural arrival regions that have faced a strong demographic decline for decades (Braun and Simons, 2015; Empirica, 2016; Franke and Magel, 2016; Weidinger, 2020). Thus, immigration was framed as a possible driver of local development (Kordel and Weidinger, 2020; Weidinger, 2020).

Exploring this argumentation from the perspective of integration theory, it is obvious that an integration outcome as envisaged above depends on a positive integration trajectory, which is not only dependent on (infra)structural aspects, such as absorptive capacities in the housing and labor market, but also on the social embeddedness of newcomers in a specific socio-spatial environment. The notion of well-being, or more precisely "social well-being," is helpful for conceptualizing this. While well-being is usually described as a complex psychological concept, social aspects, notably the dimension of social acceptance and social integration, are seen as crucial (Carruthers and Hood, 2004; Teghe and Rendell, 2005). Research on well-being has found that the place in which one lives contributes to the level of well-being in manifold ways, be it the beauty of the nature, good neighborhood relations or the feeling that one can contribute positively to the local society (Zumbo and Michalos, 2000; Coulthard et al., 2002; Shields and Wooden, 2003). On the community level, social well-being is connected to social sustainability and resilience: social well-being of migrants in a community enlarges collective social capital, and can thus initiate, steer or intensify community development (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Teghe and Rendell, 2005). Well-being in this context must be understood as an individual psychological condition, yet embedded in time and space (see, e.g., Diener, 2009; Aikawa and Kleyman, 2019).

In this paper, we argue that positive social contact with the resident population is a prerequisite for immigrants' well-being. The socio-spatial characteristics of rural arrival regions, with a high level of interpersonal contacts and social nearness, might provide a supportive context for establishing positive social contacts and interactions between immigrants and resident population, which can gradually lead to reciprocal influence and social change (Sam, 2006, p. 15). Crucial aspects are

the quantity and quality of everyday interactions between the resident population and immigrants, the openness of the resident population toward foreigners, and the willingness of both—resident population and immigrants—to integrate (Berry, 1991; Sam, 2006). This paper departs from those framing thoughts and explores mutual expectations, perceptions and experiences of social contact between residents and refugees in rural regions of Germany. The empirical part follows a multi-perspective approach and draws on empirical data from a citizen survey among 908 rural inhabitants, and from 139 qualitative interviews with refugees, which were conducted in eight rural districts in the course of a collaborative research project between 2018 and 2020 (see section Results).[1]

Our paper is structured in five sections: following this introduction (section Introduction), a conceptual chapter discusses major theoretical approaches regarding the role of social contact in integration processes and the establishment of place-based belonging as a precondition for evoking social change (section Conceptual Considerations). We then briefly explain the main steps of our empirical research (section Materials and Methods). Section Results presents our findings, regarding the expectations, perceptions and experiences of social contacts among the resident population and refugees. In the final section Discussion and Conclusion, we discuss our findings and draw preliminary conclusions for the wider field under study.

CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Putting the individual's strive to participating in the economic, political and social life of the host society and associated societal frameworks at the core of the debate about integration, Ager and Strang (2008) developed a mid-level theory for analyzing integration, both from the perspective of immigrants, in this case refugees, and the local or resident population. Ten interdependent realms, facilitators, and key components, which are presented hierarchically, represent the core of the theory. Social connection plays an important role in, among other things, accessing employment, housing, education and healthcare, and thus drives "the process of integration at a local level" (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 177). Thereby, a distinction can be drawn between social bonds (encompassing relations to family members, ethnic, national or religious communities) and social bridges (i.e., those with the resident population and social links, or those with actors associated to governmental structures (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Ager and Strang, 2008).

Social bonds and bridges offer practical support to refugees, e.g., with regard to access to health and welfare services, interpreting, financial and emotional support, and reducing feelings of isolation and depression (Zetter and Pear, 2000; Sales, 2002), while bonds in particular enable immigrants to share cultural and social practices and "maintain familiar patterns of relationships" (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 178). Whether social

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[1]The collaborative research project "Future for refugees in rural regions of Germany" is a collaboration between the Chemnitz University of Technology, the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, the University of Hildesheim and the Thuenen Institute of Rural Studies.

relationships become useful for the individual and subsequently support the integration process or increase their well-being depends on the degree to which they are able to overcome social distances (Granovetter, 1973). Following Granovetter (1973), connections that go beyond a bounded social network and function most effectively when they bridge social distance are termed weak ties (Granovetter, 1983, p. 208).

Especially if migrant communities are absent or are very small in number, as is often the case in rural areas, immigrants are very much reliant on establishing contacts with the resident population to receive assistance and support upon arrival (De Lima et al., 2012). For rural areas, empirical studies on social connections highlighted the greater social proximity, which facilitates orientation and enables a high number of direct contacts (Micksch and Schwier, 2000; Schader, 2011; Gruber, 2013). There is a higher potential for community and social security, and a high degree of self-organization in associations and of volunteering, which present opportunities for social participation of newcomers and facilitate integration processes (Nadler et al., 2010; Arora-Jonsson, 2017; Priemer et al., 2017; Tesch-Römer et al., 2017; Wagner, 2019). On the other hand, however, rural societies are often associated with limited diversity, an implicit understanding of homogeneity and a rather high degree of social control, which could result in strong pressure to assimilate (Rösch et al., 2020). In addition, there is a higher sensitivity toward foreignness and difference, which is more often perceived as problematic (Gruber, 2013; Arora-Jonsson, 2017). Thus, findings point to specific assets, but also possible detriments of rural regions regarding immigrant integration, of which social contact is only one, albeit an important, building block.

Social Contact and the Role of the Resident Population

While integration research usually focuses on the aspirations, experiences and behaviors of immigrants, it is obvious that integration efforts are strongly determined by the behaviors and intentions of the resident population too. However, their role is rarely systematically researched (De Lima et al., 2012; Phillimore, 2020). Regarding the empirical focus of this paper, acculturation psychology provides a helpful concept, as it takes both "parties" into consideration. We adopt the definition of social psychology which defines acculturation as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et al., 1936, p. 149). The details of acculturation are further spelled out by the contact hypothesis: While contact is seen as essential for the initiation of adaptation or change processes, it has to be first-hand, continuous, and must take place in a specific spatio-temporal setting (Allport, 1954), i.e., in regular everyday situations, such as the neighborhood, workplace or school.

Comparative empirical research on attitudes of rural residents toward immigrants reveals a reluctant or even hostile attitude, which might be due to less contact and individual experiences of living with immigrants (e.g., Czaika and Di Lillo, 2018, for

European comparison; Zahl-Thanem and Haugen, 2018, for the case of Norway). A study on the social integration of Polish labor migrants on a Norwegian island stressed the level of social exposure, i.e., the likelihood of contact and the degree of intra-community contact of immigrants (as social bonds) and between migrants and resident population (as social bridges), as an element of social integration (Stachowski, 2020). Another study on immigrant integration in rural Sweden suggests that the level of "strangeness" in terms of skin color and ethnicity influences the ways residents approach newcomers, mixing othering processes on the basis of (non)whiteness with categories, such as race and class (Arora-Jonsson, 2017). The salience of "rural racism" is also addressed in the edited volume of Chakraborti and Garland (2004), while the research of Roos (2016) suggests that inter-group contacts in a neighborhood are crucial for reducing xenophobia.

Further steps in the acculturation process, following contact theory, are reciprocal influence and change. It is assumed that continuous personal contact causes mutual influence that can bring about changes in attitudes, behaviors, and also institutional change. Those change processes are conceptualized as dynamic and long-lasting, and they are not reduced to social or cultural change (Berry, 1991). However, we need to point out power asymmetries between resident and immigrant populations, which obviously influence the level and direction of change (Sam, 2006, p. 15). We find empirical evidence in the aforementioned study on immigrant integration in rural Sweden, which revealed that immigrants rarely engaged in local associations. They also hesitated to establish ethnic associations, as they feared being perceived as different and culturally incapable (Arora-Jonsson, 2017). An ecological development project initiated by an ethnic association was, while initially publicly valued, sabotaged by locals, pointing to the hegemonic attitude of the locals that assigns immigrants their place in the social fabric of the community (Arora-Jonsson, 2017).

The Role of the "Social" Regarding Refugees' Well-Being and Place Attachment

Social networks are considered crucial for supporting refugees' psychosocial well-being and resilience (Evans, 2005) as well as for maintaining their psychological and emotional health (e.g., Kia-Keating and Ellis, 2007; Chase et al., 2008). To be in a state of well-being, Lynnebacke (2020) identified the development of emotional bonds and a feeling of place attachment as prerequisites. In conceptual terms, the notion of embeddedness describes social relationships that encourage a sense of belonging or rootedness to a local environment (Korinek et al., 2005). With the term place attachment, Lewicka (2010) introduced a deliberate affective dimension to the discussion. Place attachment is defined as "emotional ties that people develop with their places of residence" (Lewicka, 2010, p. 35). Again, in this context, social connections are crucial. Besides exposure and familiarity toward a place, more convincing explanatory factors were presented by Ehrkamp (2005) and Richter (2011). First, social connections become stronger over time, allowing individuals to ascribe social

meanings to places. Second, individuals associate places with biographical events. Finally, affective embodied experiences may play a role (Lewicka, 2014; Lynnebacke, 2020).

A case study conducted by Boese and Philips (2017) in rural Australia highlighted the positive role of social contacts with rural residents and the participation in cultural practices, while spaces for interaction and shared experiences were found to be an important prerequisite for establishing attachments to places of residence (cf. Wernesjö, 2015; Boese and Philips, 2017, p. 63; Radford, 2017). Lacking spaces for interaction or not using available spaces—e.g., due to poor language proficiency, refugee parents' fear of discrimination or restrictive behavior toward their children, or negative attitudes from local residents—may undermine the individual's sense of attachment to place (cf. Hummon, 1992; Low and Altman, 1992; Schech and Rainbird, 2013). In addition, Spicer (2008) reminds us that experiences of neighborhood places and resulting effects of exclusion and inclusion are always age-specific and life-course related. In a case study carried out by Gilhooly and Lee (2017), participants in rural Georgia, USA, compared the opportunities to connect with neighbors with their former places of residence in cities, and highlighted the advantages of the countryside; these rural areas were also appreciated for raising children in a protected environment far from racial tensions and bad influences in urban areas (see also Huisman, 2011). The friendliness of the population experienced in everyday encounters, i.e., being recognized and greeted by others, positively contributes to feeling more secure (Ager and Strang, 2008).

In this section we presented key concepts related to the integration trajectories of immigrants, highlighting the development of social contact with the resident population as a "social bridge," notably in rural and less diverse settings where migrant communities are scarce. Taking the contact hypothesis as a starting point, we identified social proximity as a peculiarity in rural areas, which can result in supportive structures, but also in social control and pressure to assimilate with local behavior and customs. The latter may stem from the observation that how and with whom people interact in rural areas is strongly shaped by the resident population and is thus often a hegemonic experience. Moreover, social proximity increases ascriptions of "otherness" and can reinforce hostile attitudes. Whilst refugees' development of emotional ties to the place of arrival is a prerequisite for sustainable local integration trajectories, following Berry (2006) model of acculturation outcomes, we address social connections in a neighborhood as an important component since spaces of interactions can create shared experiences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data for this paper stem from our ongoing collaborative research project "Future for refugees in rural regions of Germany," which aims to provide in-depth results on rural integration conditions. The project applies a mixed-methods approach, collecting structural data on major integration dimensions, such as housing, labor market, mobility, education, and health, implementing expert interviews on local integration governance,

and addressing both the refugees and the residents of rural municipalities as respondents with specific perspectives on the topic. The fieldwork for this project took place in 32 rural municipalities (40 for the citizen survey), spread over eight rural districts in the Federal States of Bavaria, Hesse, Lower Saxony and Saxony. Following a typology of rurality derived by the Thuenen Institute (Küpper, 2016), all districts are classified as "very rural."[2] For the 32 municipalities within the districts, we only chose municipalities with <20,000 inhabitants, which were also sites of refugee reception at the time of inquiry.

The presented paper uses two datasets from this ongoing project: first, a citizen survey among 908 residents in the case study sites and, second, a series of 139 qualitative interviews with foreigners mostly holding a recognized protection status[3] who reside at those sites. Such a mixed methods approach was applied since two target groups were addressed: for an informative sample size for the survey, a postal process was most promising and affordable, whilst for the perspective of refugees, language barriers and challenges to access them made face-to-face encounters the most valuable method.

Representative Survey

The original sample size was 4,000—100 people in each of the 40 chosen municipalities, of which 32 were hosting refugees. The survey was implemented as a written survey, giving respondents the opportunity to either fill in a paper questionnaire or do an online version of the survey. The questionnaire had five sections, starting with questions on the rural living environment and neighborhood relations (with "neighborhood" defined as "your ultimate living environment") (1) and the current economic situation and life satisfaction (2), and then moving the focus gradually toward aspects of ethnic and cultural relations with reference to several scales of observation (3), attitudes to asylum and integration (4), and concluding with questions on the socio-demographic profiles of the respondents' households (5). A pre-test was carried out to make sure that the wording of the questionnaire was understood by the survey respondents. The postal addresses were selected as a representative sample in each of the case study sites' populations registers. Due to non-response and some cases of address failure, we were able to compile 908 valid responses, which amounted to a response rate of 23%. This is satisfactory since the response rate of postal surveys strongly depends on the amount of contact, e.g., follow-up letters, personal contact and reminder letters (Menold, 2016). Due to data security reasons and limited resources, the participants received only one letter with the questionnaire and one follow-up postcard. As responses are distributed homogeneously across the survey regions and correspond to the total sample population

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[2]The indicator considers population density, share of agriculture and forestry, share of one- and two-family houses, inhabitants in the catchment area and distance to major urban centers (Küpper, 2016, p. 5).

[3]The sample mainly consisted of individuals who had received a temporary or permanent protection status due to their asylum application (entitlement to asylum, refugee protection or subsidiary protection, or a national ban on deportation), or for other reasons, e.g., due to resettlement, as well as 25 individuals who had had a suspension of deportation following a rejection of their asylum claim, or permission to reside as they were still in their asylum procedure.

in central socio-demographic indices, we assume that responses are representative. Nevertheless, a bias in the sample due to heterogeneous interests in (not) participating in the study cannot be ruled out. Data were coded, computed, and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). First, descriptive analyses were carried out, which will be followed by multivariate analyses later on in the project.

Interviews With Refugees

Narrative interviews were conducted among refugees who had resided at least 6 months in Germany, and lived in one of the selected 32 municipalities when the sampling took place. Most of them had some kind of protection status at the time of the interview (see text footnote 3). Preparation for the interviews entailed icebreaker meetings to build up personal relationships between the interviewer, the participant and, where needed, the interpreter. The interviews themselves aimed at unraveling past experiences of other places since arrival in Germany, and providing an in-depth reflection about the current rural site of living and future aspirations. Following a participatory research approach, the narrative interview included two visual tools: (im)mobility biography (Kieslinger et al., 2020) and mobility mapping (Weidinger et al., 2019). With the former, participants were invited to draw their previous places of residence, either group accommodation or self-rented flats, and to reflect on them. This paved the way for an interpretation of relational negotiations of "good" places and neighborhoods. With mobility mapping, participants identified individually important places in their everyday lives and evaluated their accessibility.

In total, 139 interviews with 192 people were conducted, lasting between 60 and 235 min. Participants mostly originated from Syria ($n = 110$), Afghanistan ($n = 22$), Iraq ($n = 19$), and Eritrea ($n = 12$), and they were 34.3 years old on average. The sample included both individuals that lived alone as well as families with and without children. The perspective of women, who often arrived in the course of family reunification, was especially taken into consideration, being reflected in their 42.2% share of participants. However, for this paper, no gender-specific analysis was conducted, since the focus was on negotiations concerning overall family-related constellations. For the analysis, an emphasis was put on connections between the spoken word and the graphical elicitation. Thus, interviews were transcribed verbatim and subsequently coded, using a deductive-inductive approach with both descriptive and analytical codes. Timelines and maps were edited graphically and rendered anonymous. The analysis followed the product-oriented mode of analysis for narrative mapping suggested by Lutz et al. (2003) as well as the thematic (and visual) analysis as part of narrative analysis suggested by Kohler Riessman (2005, 2008). Quotes presented below were translated into English by the authors.

RESULTS

In this section, we will explore expectations for and perceptions of a positive neighborhood, i.e., the question of neighborhood quality, neighborly contact and concrete experiences. We will jointly discuss data from our citizen survey among rural residents and data from interviews with refugees on their perception of coexistence in the rural neighborhoods. Focusing on the specific rural conditions, it will be illustrated how they influence personal expectations, perceptions and experiences of neighborhood relations. As a general differentiating aspect, we have to point out that the respondents of our citizens' survey have very little direct contact with foreigners at all, while the interviewed refugees can certainly all reflect on experiences as newcomers in a rural neighborhood. This general difference leads to the situation that refugees present an informed reflection on their experiences in the neighborhood, while the survey respondents mainly stay at the level of expectations and perceptions, both of which are seemingly shaped by specific stereotypes regarding foreigners in the neighborhood.

Expectations and Perceptions of Neighborhood Relationships: Perspectives of Resident Population and Refugees

From the side of the rural resident population, there is a high satisfaction rate regarding the neighborhood quality: a large majority of respondents either fully or mostly agreed about feeling happy in their neighborhood (90.2%) and stated that there is a nice, friendly atmosphere (85.5%). Most neighbors are known personally (84.6% fully/mostly agree), and are characterized as helpful (85.1%) (**Table 1**). Concerning openness toward newcomers, most respondents have the impression that integration into the neighborhood would not be difficult. Only 13.1% agree with the statement that newcomers would not have it easy in the neighborhood, and 21.4% partly agree (**Table 1**). However, given that most respondents have already lived in their neighborhood for quite a long time, this impression might be biased due to their own lack of experiences with moving into a new neighborhood.

What does the resident population expect from newcomers in their rural neighborhood? The majority (79.4%) hope that newcomers would greet them in the street. Furthermore, new neighbors should be open for neighborly activities (62.1%) and abide by the rules (50.0%). Two fifths of our respondents want newcomers to introduce themselves to them; one third hope to not be disturbed by new neighbors, and one fifth expect that nothing would change if newcomers moved into the neighborhood (**Figure 1**). Those answers give a good indication of the social environment in rural neighborhoods: while inhabitants' self-assessments suggest a friendly and helpful overall atmosphere, personal contacts are of minor intensity, but generally possible. While in daily life, people generally stay at a distance, they are ready to engage more intensively should the situation make it necessary. The integration of newcomers into the social fabric of the neighborhood is not perceived as problematic, as long as newcomers understand and abide by the (unwritten) rules of the society.

However, we cannot validate if this rather open attitude would equally apply to any social group. In order to gain more insight into possible prejudices, we asked our respondents for an assessment about the suitability of their municipality regarding social groups that display a varying degree of diversity

TABLE 1 | Conditions of the rural neighborhood (in % of responses).

Item	Not at all.	Somewhat disagree	Partly yes, partly no.	Somewhat agree	Fully applies.
There are many elderly people living in my neighborhood.	1.4	11.3	40.9	32.5	13.9
There are many families with children in my neighborhood.	10.2	33.2	34.9	13.0	8.7
There are many residents with a migration background in my neighborhood.	49.3	34.2	12.0	2.7	1.8
I feel happy in my neighborhood.	0.7	1.2	7.9	38.9	51.3
The atmosphere in my neighborhood is nice and friendly.	0.8	1.8	11.9	43.7	41.8
I mostly know my neighbors.	0.9	3.9	10.6	24.7	59.9
In general, most neighbors are helpful.	1.1	2.7	11.1	42.1	43.0
Newcomers don't have it easy in the neighborhood.	20.3	45.2	21.4	10.0	3.1

Source: own survey, N = 803–890.

FIGURE 1 | Expectations regarding newcomers in the neighborhood (in % of respondents); Source: own survey, *N* = 904.
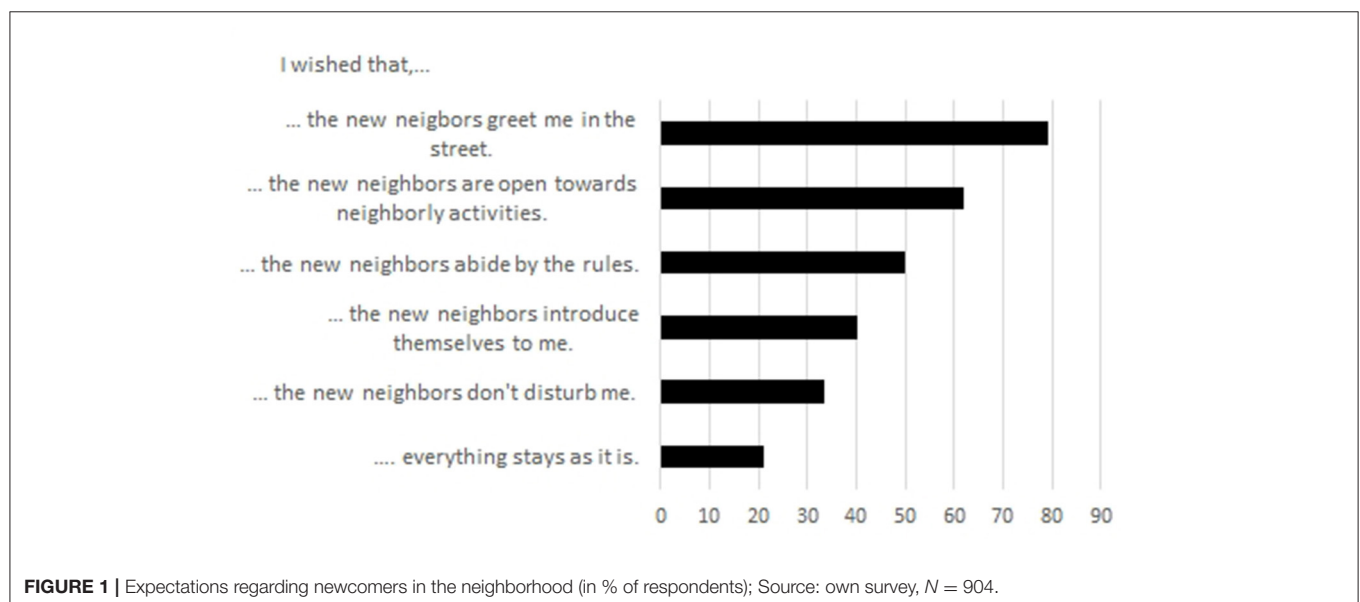
in comparison to the population majority. As the answers show (**Figure 2**), for groups who are actually present in the neighborhood (elderly people, families, young people), the municipality is perceived a suitable place. For groups that significantly differ from the respondents' own characteristics, the assessment is less positive, and there is a higher rate of people who cannot decide ("don't know"). This is specifically clear for "foreigners," "people with another skin color," and "refugees," where around half of the respondents either make a negative assessment or cannot decide at all. The reason for this assessment might be their own feelings of hostility, but it could also be

unfamiliarity with diversity in everyday life, as suggested by other empirical evidence on rural places of reception (e.g., Gruber, 2013; Arora-Jonsson, 2017).

In contrast to the predominantly positive evaluation of the neighborhood quality, contacts among neighbors are of minor intensity (**Figure 3**). Even though most respondents indicate that they visit their neighbors or lend items to their neighbors, only a minority of respondents states they do this often or very often. However, every second respondent offers help to neighbors either often or very often, which indicates a generally positive and attentive attitude among our respondents. Having a look at the

FIGURE 2 | "Is your town either a good or not a good place to live for …" (in % of respondents); Source: own survey, $N = 857–874$.
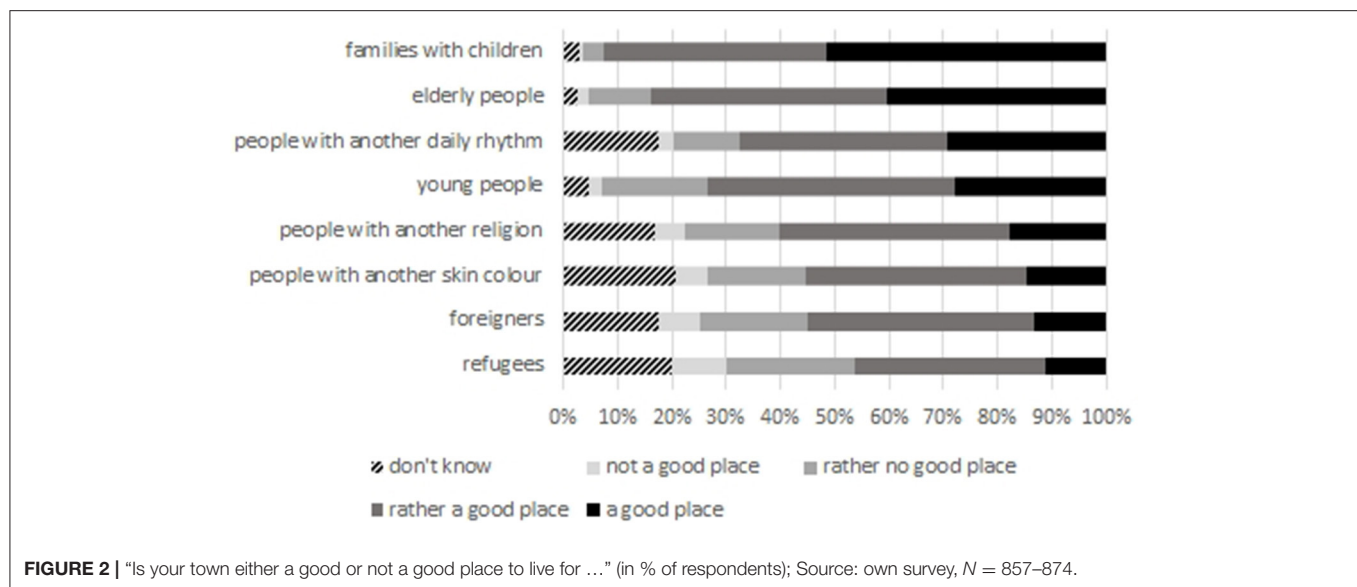
place of living, we observed a slight decrease of the mentioned contact activities with rising settlement size ($r = -0.09, -0.07, -0.11, p = 0.01$), which might hint toward more intensive contacts and relationships in small towns.

Refugees rarely mentioned specific expectations of neighborhood relationships. In case they touched upon that issue, they stressed very general expectations, such as safety and security. Moreover, they consider a "good" relationship with their neighbors, which most define as living alongside each other without having major problems, as important. For some, "good" includes having mutual invitations to talk and eat together as was common in their countries of origin. Besides positive expectations, some respondents anticipated possible negative attitudes toward families with noisy children as well as foreigners.

I don't want to cause problems. Anyway, people talk about foreigners. Lots of problems. I actually don't want to cause problems. I simply want to live in peace, making use of this second chance. (male Syrian, in his 20s, II-6[4])

The refugees' perceptions of neighborhood relationships are negotiated relationally—between their rural site of living and their previous places of residence in other parts of Germany or other countries. In addition, refugees in rural areas perceived differences with regard to neighborhood and daily encounters in urban areas that stem from their own experiences during visits to relatives or on shopping trips. In cities, neighbors are perceived as more anonymous and they and random people on the street do not regularly greet each other, whereas in villages and small towns contacts are more personal:

This is a big advantage in the countryside […] that you can better, I mean more easily get to know people. And you are not a number, but it is personal. (male Syrian, in his 20s, VI-4)

When we go out, other people are always very friendly, for instance our German neighbors. We always greet each other on the streets. (female Afghan, in her 50s, IV-25)

Casual encounters on the streets associated with friendly greetings, such as "Hallo, wie gehts?" ("Hi, how are you?") are evaluated positively. Some interviewees highlighted the advantage that everyone knows everyone, especially if they need help, while others perceived social proximity to be one-sided and found similarities to rural areas in their home countries:

Here, everyone knows me, but I know nobody [laughs]. This is really … creepy, I don't know [laughs]. This is the same in Syria, if you live in a village. There, everyone knows the stranger, the one who is not from there. (male Syrian, in his 20s, III-3)

In addition, some participants from Saxony even perceived it to be easier to get to know people in cities, as they believed people in their rural places of residence were not so open-minded (e.g., interviews VII-9 and_VIII-5). This may result from a considerably lesser migration-related diversity in the East German case study regions compared to most West German regions (e.g., Bösch and Hong So, 2020).

In other cases, participants perceived that rural inhabitants do not match their age profile. This is an issue if the refugees, who are younger than the average population in rural areas, want to establish contacts with people of the same age. The refugees' reflections and experiences regarding the demographic and ethnic fabric of rural neighborhoods are supported by the survey data, where respondents characterized their neighborhoods as having high proportions of elderly people but also (albeit to a lesser degree) families with children, and as being ethnically homogeneous: over 80% indicate that there are only few inhabitants with a migration biography in their neighborhood (**Table 1**).

Summing up, residents have a positive impression of their neighborhood and describe neighborhood relations as good, albeit rather functional. Newcomers to the neighborhood are expected to abide by the (unwritten) social rules, e.g., greeting

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[4]To protect personal data of our participants, only vital data are displayed here. For reasons of transparency, however, all quotes presented are tagged with a token including the rural district and the interview number.
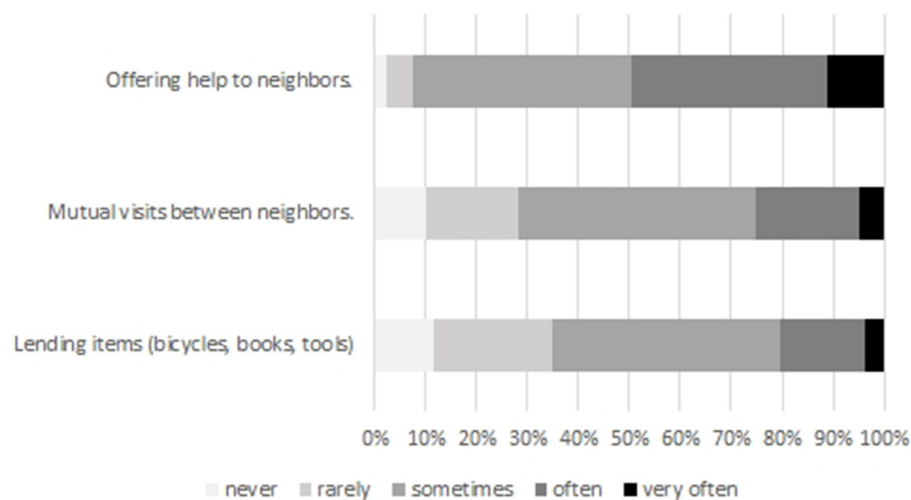
FIGURE 3 | Frequency of contact to neighbors (in % of respondents); Source: own survey (*N* = 873–894).

on the streets. This attitude is well-reflected by the refugees, who try to understand how things are done "correctly" and adapt to them (see also findings from Larsen, 2011). Thus, the interviewed refugees display a high level of reflexivity regarding their new neighborhood and how they might be seen by the German residents. They also reflect on the variations of neighborhood relations in Germany regarding age, family status, and ethnicity of their neighbors, and integrate those experiences into an explanatory frame which is strongly shaped by the neighborhood culture in their home countries. Social proximity as a peculiar notion of rural neighborhoods, associated with serendipitous encounters in public space and the absence of anonymity, is confirmed by refugees. Regarding general perceptions about diversity and the level of tolerance in their neighborhood and the municipality as a whole, residents display an assimilative perception of coexistence; this might not (only) represent their personal perception, but the anticipation of the general mood in society, as the differentiated assessment of their municipality's aptness to integrate newcomers with specific profiles (**Figure 2**) points out.

Experiences of Daily Encounters and Social Relationships

In our next dataset, we asked our respondents about the frequency of their contact with foreigners. Firstly, we wanted to identify weak ties that provide bridges between two or more bounded groups. Secondly, we focused on positive experiences made during such encounters, as various empirical studies showed that especially positively perceived contacts can reduce stereotypes (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006; Rapp, 2014; Roos, 2016) (**Figure 4**).

As the data show, positive contact experiences with foreigners are generally rare among our respondents. If there are positive contacts of a significant frequency, these happen mostly in the workplace, or (less frequently) during leisure activities or in circles of friends. On the other hand, a majority of our

respondents never or only rarely had any positive experiences with foreigners in their neighborhood or in the family. The prevalence of positive contact stood in close relation to the presence of foreign residents in the respective rural district: while respondents from the two districts with the lowest share of foreigners (below 4%) reported the lowest share of positive contacts (below 1.5%) and the highest share of no positive contact experiences with foreigners in the neighborhood (more than 59%), respondents who reported the highest share of positive contacts (more than 18%) lived in the three districts with the highest share of foreigners (more than 7%). This finding weighs even more when its correlation to xenophobic sentiments is considered: in our sample, those who reported few or no positive contact experiences with immigrants expressed xenophobic sentiments to a larger extent than those with positive contact experiences. Both findings clearly support the contact hypothesis, which assumes that negative stereotypes can be reduced and integration processes be supported when having frequent inter-group contacts in everyday situations (see similar conclusion in Roos, 2016). With regard to the specifics of rural settlements, we can compare our findings with the general population survey ALLBUS, which was collected with a representative sample and thus represents both urban and rural living conditions. The ALLBUS found that 72.4% of all respondents in Germany reported frequent positive contacts with foreigners in various situations, whilst only 10.4% had negative ones. Mostly, contacts occurred in circles of friends (54.2%), in the workplace (51.8%) and in the neighborhood (41.1%, Gesis, 2016). Thus, we need to highlight the absence of a diverse population as an important contextual condition relevant for the well-being of foreign newcomers in rural settings.

While respondents of the citizens' survey had very little direct contact with foreigners at all, the interviewed refugees could certainly all reflect on experiences of social interactions in their direct living environment and beyond. Our interviewees' experiences were rather diverse. While some reported close social

FIGURE 4 | Positive experiences with foreigners in everyday situations (in % of respondents); Source: own survey, $N = 818–847$.
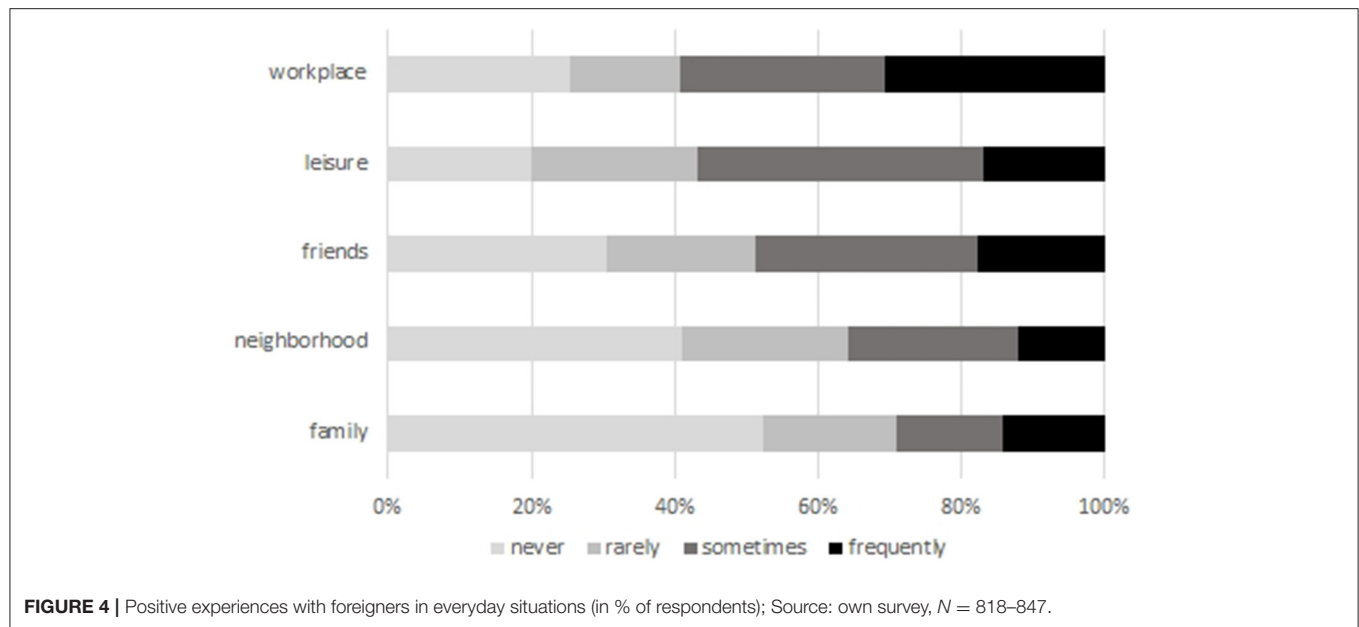
contacts and mutual support, others experienced very limited and superficial social contacts, and also negative experiences:

Where we live, we only have little contact with our neighbors. Except for the one neighbor who lives above us, we hardly talk with each other. […] And it not only works like this for us, but we know another family living close. For them it is very similar: they only have little contact with their neighbors. (male stateless person, in his 30s, IV-20)

Explanations for scarce social contacts are firstly a lack of time on the part of both refugees and neighbors due to work, participation in language classes and further education commitments, family obligations or concentrating on cultivating contacts outside the region. Secondly, language barriers may further impede socializing, in case refugees are not yet comfortable with their German language skills or there is no common language in which to talk with other foreigners. Thirdly, there may simply be a lack of possibilities for social interactions, especially if asylum accommodation or private apartments are situated on the periphery of villages or towns, where refugees are the only residents and have no direct neighbors.

Nevertheless, a considerable share of our interviewees reported positive experiences and described their neighbors as "nice" and "friendly":

And our neighbors, whether Germans or Arabs or whatever, are all nice. Nobody has a problem. (male Syrian, in his 20s, II-6)

We do not have close contact with the neighbors, but in general they are very friendly and the landlord is nice as well. He comes every now and then and checks if everything is fine. (male Syrian, in his 30s, III-31)

While the first quote suggests very limited expectations regarding positive neighborhood relations, i.e., the mere absence of problems, the second example indicates that the typical rural setting of houses with a limited number of tenants or with the landlord living in the same house can be a source of support

in everyday matters. This support may encompass occasional looking after kids, assisting with doing homework for school or teaching German language:

The landlord always tried to practice and teach German with our family. And he was always motivated to just talk with us, and read and write. And we—my wife and I, and both our kids—learnt quite a lot from him. We have contact nearly every day, every day we talk with each other. (male Syrian, in his 30s, V-19)

The example shows that social bridges are first and foremost instrumental, confirming the findings of Wessendorf and Phillimore (2019). Moreover, social interaction is supported by spatial proximity, since the landlord is involved. However, in other cases we found that landlords or other tenants were perceived as rather obtrusive with a paternalistic behavior or, conversely, left contact requests unanswered. This points to the ambivalence of the specific fabric of rural neighborhoods regarding the effects of physical nearness and social control.

However, the specifics of rural neighborhoods, notably the expectations regarding the behavior of newcomers to introduce themselves, greet others, and offer help (see **Figure 1**), can be a starting point for establishing positive relations, if the newcomers are aware of those practices. Our data show a number of positively valued neighborhood relations where refugees are the ones who provide support. Bi-directional contacts where refugees and neighbors are at eye level emerged from casual meetings in the stairway or garden, where kids can act as bridge builders (cf. Stachowski, 2020).

The casual meetings, in turn, pave the way for more intensive situations of social contact, such as inviting neighbors to their own homes.

When I met her first, I said: "Please, have a coffee with me." She was surprised that I simply said "Please, have a coffee with me." She said: "The Germans do not do that." […] But then

we drank coffee and ate cake and since then we are very good neighbors. (female Syrian, in her 30s, VII-12)

And I do have here—most important—I have a nice neighbor. I can always have a cup of coffee with her, and a chat with her, and this is my hobby. [...] And she takes care of my kids, and I take care of hers. Everything is fine. (female Syrian, in her 20s, I-1)

As the first quote suggests, individual invitations among neighbors may be introduced as a new social practice by the newcomers and can be valued positively by local residents, thus triggering social change in neighborly relations. Also, as the second quote suggests, biographical similarities, such as bringing up children can be an additional incentive for intensified neighborly contact and the development of belonging.

Interviewed refugees also reported motivations for establishing social bridges, e.g., mutual interest in each other's families or customs. As the following quote shows, intercultural openness of the local residents is valued as a sign of welcome by the interviewees.

The inhabitants always celebrate Eid[5] with us. After the prayers, they came over and we were surprised. In (*place anonymised*) they searched on the internet how Muslims celebrate Eid and then they prepared everything, so that the people did not feel like strangers. (male Syrian, in his 40s, and female Syrian, in her 30s, I-6)

In this case, those initial practices of building social bridges were identified by interviewees, underlining the stages described by the contact hypothesis (social contact-reciprocity-change). Moreover, in this case empathy for biographical crises in the neighborhood seemingly led to the establishment of social bonds, and thus to place attachment:

But we also celebrate festivals with people, and if someone dies, we go to their relatives to comfort them. We do not feel like strangers anymore; we belong to this place now. (male Syrian, in his 40s, and female Syrian, in her 30s, I-6)

Additionally, new institutions established by volunteers also provide important opportunities for social contacts. In particular, refugee relief groups were frequently cited.

Through our German neighbors, through the "Asylcafe," there is a gathering for women, who always help refugees. Those people had contact with the local administration.

Such institutionalized meeting places provide opportunities for mutual contact on a regular basis and build bridges in both directions. Simultaneously, volunteers attending meetings also operate as actors who connect refugees to state institutions (social links in the sense of Putnam), such as the local administration. Alongside social bridges, social bonds also develop in rural neighborhoods and localities. As the quotes below show, mutual visits were highlighted, whilst small migrant communities were reported, especially in small towns.

We Syrians continuously visit each other, and when you have a problem, you go to your neighbor. (male Syrian, in his 20s, II-2)

A family who came from Turkey chatted a lot with me, provided assistance and visited me. (male Syrian, in his 30s, V-14)

Well I have the advantage that I have many relatives and acquaintances living here. They have been here for years, know how things work here and give me a lot of help. When I need something to do, work, then I find it quickly. (male Syrian, in his 30s, V-10)

Members of the migrant community who have lived in the rural locality for longer play an important role for orientation and knowledge transfer. As such, they take on the role of mediators.

Summing up, the interviewed refugees discuss elaborate experiences regarding bridging social capital, i.e., contacts to local residents in their neighborhood, and among social networks of friends (see also Gilhooly and Lee, 2017). Listening to their accounts, it becomes clear that those kind of social bridges that are evaluated positively are based on mutual interest around family issues or cultural aspects. The latter may be especially applicable for open-minded rural residents, who consider meeting migrants as a chance for intercultural encounters in rural areas that were relatively homogeneous in the past. Simultaneously, social bridging may evoke wider social changes once residents share positive experiences. As rural residents often hold multiple roles in the society, this increases opportunities for encounters. Refugees' narrations also reveal the importance of contacts with their own group in terms of bonding social capital (see also Larsen, 2012; Kilpatrick et al., 2015). While the possibility of finding stability within a community sharing a similar background may be easier in many urban agglomerations compared to rural regions, the effects upon integration are still debated, e.g., in terms of socio-spatial segregation (Daley, 2007; Spicer, 2008; Platts-Fowler and Robinson, 2015).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The scope of this paper was to analyze the role of social contact as a factor in refugees' well-being and place attachment. The assumption was that these might foster positive integration outcomes and long-term settlement, which in turn can contribute to community development. Drawing from an on-going research project on the integration of refugees in rural regions in Germany, we specifically examined expectations, perceptions and experiences of neighborhood relationships and social contact among resident population and refugees. Both datasets illustrate the specific perspectives of rural inhabitants, considering the resident population and refugees at a considerable sample size. The combination of both datasets enables us to indicate social norms, based on expectations, which refugees (have to) adapt to, as well as neighborhood practices and experiences. The latter were mostly reflected upon by refugees; they could identify social contacts that contribute to well-being. We will now wrap up the main findings of our empirical study and reflect them against the backdrop of our guiding questions and concepts.

Regarding the openness of the resident population toward foreign newcomers and the level of tolerance, we used the contact hypothesis to create our guiding questions. We assumed that the possibility to meet foreigners on an everyday basis would help to reduce stereotypes, while the absence of those contact opportunities might hamper the development of a

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[5]Eid-al-Fitr is a religious holiday that marks the end of the fasting month Ramadan.

tolerant position. We showed that among our rural survey respondents, there are only few experiences of everyday contact with foreigners, not only in their neighborhood, but in general. This is undoubtedly due to the low level of diversity in most parts of our surveyed areas, which lowers the probability for intercultural encounter. Moreover, we found correlations between the scarcity of inter-group contacts and the expression of negative stereotypes against immigrants. Those findings strongly support the contact hypothesis. With regards to our guiding assumptions on the assets of rural reception conditions, we could identify an ambivalence regarding social proximity and control, and the necessity to consider not only the quantity but also the quality of social contacts.

Expectations of a good neighborhood quality encompass calm and helpful attitudes and, especially among resident populations, culturally mediated expectations, such as greeting on the street, and activities which newcomers are expected to adjust to. Regarding perceptions of rural neighborhoods, refugees confirmed that there is social proximity, especially in relation to urban areas. Social bridges often include weak ties and serendipitous encounters. Whilst Wessendorf and Phillimore (2019) suggest the functional character of these sorts of interactions, and assume that primarily closer friendships evoke a sense of belonging, our data suggest differentiating this in the specific context of the neighborhood. First, the intensity of social interactions are dynamic since casual encounters with neighbors may become intensified and result in acquaintances and friendships. Weak ties may become strong ties depending on (1) time spent together, (2) degree of emotional intensity, (3) intimacy (mutual trust), and (4) the type of reciprocal assistance (Granovetter, 1973). Second, individuals can ascribe meaning to casual encounters and consider them as a contribution to attachment (cf. Ager and Strang, 2008). Such weak ties to native residents, but also to other foreigners and refugees who arrived in the past, are evaluated as satisfying in cases where refugees had heard about or initially feared bad interactions with neighbors. They are considered important when it comes to overcoming "everyday otherness" and long-term assistance with regard to the integration process (see also structural and transversal enablers, Radford, 2016), as well as for the development of a group identity. The question of whether strong ties represent a precondition for long-term settlement cannot be affirmed yet. Regardless, individual aspirations and the opportunities for social interactions as well as the agency to create opportunities are crucial. Investing in a good neighborhood as one part of well-being may be considered as a first and important step toward the development of staying aspirations. For this purpose, a continuous reflection on aspirations and what the current place of residence can provide (place dependence), as well as emotional attachment, is necessary.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because datasets are confidential as agreed upon with the study participants. However, they can be made available on site upon request. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to johanna.fick@thuenen.de.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Ethikkommission der Philosophischen Fakultät der TU Chemnitz. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

BG was involved in drafting the paper idea and structure of the article and writing of the introduction, discussion and conclusion jointly with co-authors, wrote the conceptual considerations (especially chapter Social Contact and the Role of the Resident Population), the method section (chapter Representative Survey) as well as the results section on the survey data, and made substantial contributions to the revision procedure and was in charge for communication with the reviewers and editors throughout the submission and review process. SK was involved in drafting the paper idea and structure of the article and writing of the introduction jointly with co-authors, drafted and wrote conceptual considerations (especially The Role of the 'Social' Regarding Refugees' Well-being and Place Attachment) and the results section regarding qualitative data from refugees, and also drafted and wrote discussions and conclusions jointly with co-authors and made substantial contributions to the revision process. TW drafted the paper idea jointly with co-authors and contributed substantially to the writing of material and methods section (Interviews With Refugees) as well as the elaboration of the results section with regard to the refugee perspective and involved in the revision process and made substantial contributions. MB, HS, and DS were involved in the analysis of data and drafting the structure of the results section and made substantial contributions throughout the whole revision process. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Feel Good? The Dialectical Integration of International Immigrants in Rural Communities: The Case of the Canadian Prairie Provinces

Jennifer Dauphinais[1], Sherine Salmon[1] and Mikaël Akimowicz[1,2]*

[1] Rural Development Institute, Brandon University, Brandon, MB, Canada, [2] Laboratoire d'Etude et de Recherche sur l'Economie, les Politiques et les Systèmes sociaux, Université Toulouse III – Paul Sabatier, Toulouse, France

The increasing influx of international immigrants settling in rural communities, where their landing is expected to revitalize communities, has triggered concerns about international immigrants' adaptation and well-being. In this article, we specifically focus on international immigrants' economic integration as a part of their socialization in communities. This article integrates the results of two independent studies, respectively, focusing on rural employers' motivations to hire immigrants and immigrants' integration in rural communities, both taking place in the Canadian Prairie provinces. Based on a survey of 112 employers and 36 in-depth interviews with international immigrants and organizations promoting their integration, we explore the impact of mediating organizations on the well-being of international immigrants. The results highlight that mediating organizations facilitate the sharing of meanings between rural communities' stakeholders, which is key to success for both employers and employees in formalized organizations such as businesses. The results suggest that international immigrants' well-being is facilitated by mediating organizations that foster a dialectical transformation of rural communities where both hosts and immigrants understand each other.

Keywords: international immigration, immigrant integration, socialization, rural identity, well-being, Canadian Prairie provinces

INTRODUCTION

Canada's appeal has fostered strong immigration flux, be it to escape perilous situations, to discover new beginnings, or to experience financial prosperity (Gignac, 2013; Randstad, n.d.). Immigration has become a primary driver of population growth throughout the country. In 2018, international in-migration accounted for 82% of the Canadian population increase (Statistics Canada, 2019) and the immigrant population represented 22% of the Canadian population, the highest since the 1921 census (Statistics Canada, 2017a). In 2018, the number of international immigrant entrances reached 321 035, placing Canada's population growth in first place among its G7 counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2019). In a context of an aging population (Coutinho, 2018; Statistics Canada, 2018), Canada stands to benefit from the ongoing influx of younger immigrants. This is especially true for rural communities, where population aging, youth retention, and labor shortages are major challenges (Aure et al., 2018; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019a).

Regionalization policies (e.g., the Provincial Nominee Program launched in 1996 or the Local Immigration Partnerships launched in 2008) have seen the redistribution of immigrant populations away from the larger gateway cities and toward smaller cities and rural areas of the country (Brown, 2017). By doing so, population growth is now more spread out, helping to reduce population decline in smaller communities, while helping to alleviate the growth pressures placed on larger cities' centers (Carter et al., 2008). Although broader regional distribution can help to revitalize declining communities, it can also bring with it some challenges. Despite the number of immigrants settling outside of larger metropolitan areas, the organizations serving these communities are often underrepresented. This has implications for immigrants who may not be able to access government-mandated services that are unevenly distributed across rural municipalities (De Lima and Wright, 2009; Mukhtar et al., 2016; Arora-Jonsson, 2017).

Leveraging immigration for the revitalization of rural communities requires welcoming international immigrants in a manner that enables them to find their place socially, culturally, and economically (Carter et al., 2008; Wulff et al., 2008; Brown, 2017). Thus, there is a need to better understand the complex adaptation dynamics of international immigrants in rural Canada.

For Shields et al. (2016), the process of settlement targets adjustment (acclimatizing to the language, culture, environment), adaptation (mastering situations without great assistance), and integration (the ability to contribute to the host society free of social, economic, cultural, and political barriers). Settlement organizations are expected to assist immigrants to the point of integration and citizenship through direct (i.e., needs assessment and referrals, information and orientation, language training, employment-related, community connections) and indirect services (i.e., partnerships and capacity building) (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019c). A dense network of settlement organizations is an integral part of Canada's strategy, which is generally positively acknowledged globally (Sidney, 2014). However, studies such as Kaushik and Drolet (2018: p.2), who pointed out "disappointing results in the economic and social outcomes of the integration of skilled immigrants," tend to show that Canada's current strategy can be improved. **Box 1** provides a historical overview of the Canadian immigration policy. In particular, social and health policy-makers should consider strategies to increase access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services (Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), 2019). While Canada has focused on the successful tenets of integration, immigrants' well-being is often neglected or approximated by economic measurements (Frank et al., 2014; Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2016; De Lima et al., 2017).

Well-being, defined as "the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression," focuses on "but [is] not necessarily exclusive to, good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture" (Diener et al., 2010; Wells, 2010; Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2016: p.11).

According to the Mental Health Commission of Canada (2019), immigrants arriving in Canada are usually healthier (mentally and physically) than their Canadian counterparts; however, there is a decline in health after 5 years. Furthermore, immigrants are less likely to seek mental health support because of barriers such as language, stigma, and fear stemming from discomfort or unfamiliarity (Robert and Gilkinson, 2012; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2019). Employment is a salient feature in understanding how immigrants feel about life in Canada as they tend to adjust better in the society when they are more satisfied with their employment (Richmond, 1974; Starr and Roberts, 1982; Zhou, 1997): "alienated immigrants whose failure to obtain steady employment at a level commensurate with their qualifications combined to social isolation and lack of acculturation generate deep-seated dissatisfaction" (Richmond, 1974: p.47). As immigrants' well-being contributes to the social cohesion of the society at large, it is critical to shed light on the articulation of immigrants' well-being and their economic integration (Aycan and Berry, 1996; Robert and Gilkinson, 2012; Berry and Hou, 2016; Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, 2018).

With a focus on the Prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, where the number of immigrants doubled between 2001 and 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017a) and represented the landing point of 27% of Canada's immigrants in 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2017b), the goal of this article is to examine the role played by mediating organizations such as settlement organizations, i.e., third-party intermediaries that contribute to facilitating international immigrants' integration by helping them to make sense of their new environment on the well-being of international immigrants in rural areas. International immigrants' integration process is conceptualized as a secondary socialization, as defined by Berger and Luckmann (1966), a theoretical choice that emphasizes the cognitive dimension of the integration process, which goes beyond previous authors' emphasis on racism and discrimination. In particular, it enables a meso-level analysis that focuses on interactions between social actors. It is in line with Baines and Sharma's (2002: p.98) recommendation to focus on "grassroots sense of building community through the recognition of and support for the struggles and goals of differently empowered, local, and global communities of interest." The focus is on the Canadian Prairie provinces where the energy and the agri-food sectors attracted immigrants, who represent ∼8% of the regional population, the highest share in Canada. While ethnicity had shaped vibrant communities during the XIX century, nowadays these communities may struggle with the integration of the recent arrivals of international immigrants due to a hierarchical ordering of insiders and outsiders, as described by Baines and Sharma (2002). This study also focuses on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which comprise 98% of Canadian businesses and employ 91% of the labor force in the Canadian prairies (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Despite notable labor shortages—39% of SMEs reported difficulty in getting new hires—SME entrepreneurs were less likely to hire immigrants (Business Development Bank of Canada, 2018). Finally, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data extracted from

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BOX 1 | Historical overview of the Canadian Immigration Policy.

Canada's multifaceted immigration policy integrates social (i.e., reuniting families), humanitarian (i.e., providing a safe haven), and economic (i.e., recruiting workers) aspects of life (Parliament of Canada, 2015). However, Sharma (2000: p.6) notes that it is framed by "regulations governing the movement of people into Canada, as well as the legislation on citizenship, [that] have historically shaped both the territorial boundaries of the Canadian nation and people's consciousness about'being Canadian." In particular, "state laws on citizenship and immigration have helped to organize a hierarchical ordering of insiders and outsiders living and working within Canadian society" (Baines and Sharma, 2002: p.85).

Since the formation of the Dominion of Canada, restrictions on entry applied based on country of origin and ethnicity, criteria later reasserted in several Immigration Acts such as in 1910 and 1952 (Hawkins, 1991; Walsh, 2008). The official dismantling of discriminating Eurocentric policies began in 1962, replaced by an economic emphasis on human capital leading to the development of a point system in 1967 (Walsh, 2008). In 1973, a Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program introduced a migrant worker class (Sharma, 2001). Nowadays, individuals can be distinguished into migrant workers,[1] permanent residents, and citizens.

A network of settlement organizations—monoethnic, multicultural, faith-based, specialized, or a function of a broader mandate in an organization—has been developed (Canada Council for Refugees, 2000). Prior to World War II, settlement organizations existed informally through faith-based or ethnic organizations. After World War II, the influx of international immigrants initiated both (1) the provision of more developed services by private organizations that catered not only to physical needs but also to mental health needs for war victims, and (2) the development of the Citizenship Branch in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration by the Canadian government.[2] Subsequently, provincial and municipal governments formed departments to support or fund settlement programs.

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[1]Although the official label would be temporary residents (travellers, international students, and temporary workers), the scope of this article does not concern travellers and international students. The exclusion of these two subclasses of individuals facilitates the framing of the discussion of the results.

[2]The Citizenship branch was "responsible for supporting governmental and nongovernmental agencies interested in facilitating the adjustment and integration of newcomers and in developing a greater consciousness of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship" (Canada Council for Refugees, 2000: p.19).

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a survey of SME employers and interviews with both immigrants and settlement organizations is used to triangulate immigrants' experiences with employers' and settlement organizations' practices. The results show that the most successful integration takes place when there is a mutual secondary socialization of both hosts (i.e., welcoming communities) and newcomers (i.e., international immigrants), a process that we labeled dialectical integration. Interestingly, in the current neoliberal regime that sees cuts in the means of traditional settlement organizations, SMEs play a critical role in this process of dialectical integration.

The following section presents the conceptual framework designed for this analysis, which mixes Berger and Luckmann's (1966) secondary socialization concept with Porter's (2018) health perspective. We then expose the methods and data used for the analysis, which blend two independent researches with complementary perspectives. The results are presented in the section that follows and highlight the critical role of mediating organizations in immigrants' socialization process. Finally, after discussing the results, we conclude this article.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review builds on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) secondary socialization concept—i.e., the idea that "there is a temporal sequence, in the course of which he [the individual] is inducted into participation in the social dialectic" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: p.149). In the context of international immigrants' integration in rural areas, we first show that the emergence of a sense of place is contingent on the stabilization of interdependent shared meanings before incorporating Porter's (2018) health perspective to tackle international immigrants' well-being. The neoliberalization of immigration policies is finally highlighted as a potential threat to the integration of immigrants, hence to their well-being.

Socialization and Sense of Place

Prevailing cultural ideologies of rural communities are usually heavily laden with notions of rootedness, localism, stability, and attachment to place (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014; Lysgård, 2019). Whether materially true or not, they shape the symbolic representation of rural communities. At the same time, they also create a tension between locals and newcomers as the "authentic" countryside is perceived as disappearing, and the culture and linguistics are changing with it (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014; McAreavey and Argent, 2018). In line with the official state discourse that fuels an insider/outsider comprehension of immigration issues, rural inhabitants' struggles for the means of production and reproduction may result in the perception of being threatened by needy newcomers (Sharma, 2000; Brown, 2017). While out-migration is generally the accepted response to rural problems such as poverty and homelessness, when poor individuals seek to relocate to rural areas, their presence is often contested by the local community (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014). Further, the redistribution of public and social services to the more populated urban centers and the deterioration of public transportation leave many people stranded within local spaces and force others to employ complex strategies to access facilities and services that have relocated to other places (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014).

Despite settlement policies that support immigrants' retention to a certain place, there are still a number of barriers that hinder well-being (Wulff et al., 2008). The integration of immigrants into a rural or small town is contingent on their acceptance into the community. One's sense of community may be threatened by the presence of outsiders that represent a connection to the change happening both within and outside of the broader

community (Amsden et al., 2010; Radford, 2016). As immigrants' status changes from one of outsider to one of insider, the idea of community begins to change and is manifested in a "sense of us" that is collectively created through interaction, shared identity, and shared experiences (Amsden et al., 2010; Radford, 2017), paving the way for the development of a sense of place, "a complex creation of social and individual interactions and meanings that inform how people perceive the world around them. Community, as a unit of analysis, is a construction people use to organize these social interactions in a meaningful way" (Amsden et al., 2010: p.33). Contrary to the segmented assimilationist view that the white urban population is perceived as a cultural reference, we follow García and Schmalzbauer (2017) that assimilation is framed by the demographic populations as well as the physical geography of the welcoming communities.

Hypothesis 1: The denser the social network of immigrants in the host society, the easier their navigation of the social worlds.

Sense of Place and Well-Being

In this article, the conceptualization of well-being focuses on the mental, emotional, and social aspects of individuals' life as they become integrated within a community. During a socialization process, well-being is more than just a by-product of health; it becomes articulated through individuals' capacities to function well within their respective communities, along with their ability to engage in the process of self-actualization and their own personal development (Maslow, 1943; Porter, 2018). In this case, Porter's (2018) concept of embodiment can be applied to struggles experienced by immigrants as they attempt to integrate into their new surroundings. Through this concept, well-being articulates social functions as well as personal feelings, becoming an individual and social phenomenon that focuses on bodies and bodily interactions. Individuals incorporate and express their social and material worlds; therefore, their desires, activities, and self-interests should not be assumed; nor are they necessarily held in common with others but rather contingent on local bodily practices and relations (Lock, 1993; Csordas, 1994; Mol, 2002; Lock and Farquhar, 2007; Porter, 2018).

A part of self-actualization requires the ability to think across embodied differences. On the one hand, such differences can create exclusionary practices that run counter to prevailing understandings of integration and well-being (Gammeltoft, 2008; Porter, 2018). In this context, the creation and maintenance of well-being are construed as one's ability to make sense of the corporeal responses to the material and social surrounding worlds, to have some understanding of how bodies mutually perceive and affect one another within these contexts (Lundberg, 2000; Porter, 2018). In other words, we define sensemaking as the process of knowledge creation that helps to navigate social and material worlds (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020). In these worlds, beings are implicated with one another, informing and challenging their perceptions and experiences in shared spaces (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Porter, 2018). The resulting worldviews are central to make sense of the world. Therefore, care becomes

relational. It becomes the ability to negotiate the different ways that individuals experience and organize their integration into a community along with the ability to compromise between the values and expectations that individuals have (Hosnedlová, 2017; Porter, 2018). Therefore, it requires a certain juxtaposition of the relationships between sites: care between employers and immigrant employees; settlement organizations and regulating governing agencies; the attitudes of the rural communities receiving immigrants, as well as care for the self (Porter, 2018; Friese and Latimer, 2019).

Hypothesis 2: The more interdependent the social interactions of international immigrants, the more well-being they experience.

The Neoliberal Threat

Canadian public policies are ingrained with the neoliberal praxis (Baines and Sharma, 2002; Mukhtar et al., 2016). As a result, the marketization of social service provision, the devolution of government responsibilities in social welfare production to non-governmental actors, and the promotion of free-market values in the non-profit sector have become pervasive in the restructuring of social welfare policies (e.g., cutbacks in services offered, devolution of services to for-profit or nonprofit agencies, and deregulation) (Weaver et al., 2010; Mukhtar et al., 2016). Moreover, the top-down approach utilized for settlement policy (e.g., funding and mandates federally, additional mandates and program development provincially, and programs delivered at municipal or non-profit level) is not always effective. The lack of funding available to settlement agencies increases the pressure to serve more individuals with fewer resources. This naturally leads to program cutbacks, which can be particularly detrimental when it affects programs, such as domestic violence services for women, youth programs, mental health care services, and legal services (Mukhtar et al., 2016). Last but not least, funding usually happens through yearly contracts, which limits the ability to plan for long-term services. Therefore, many of the programs offered become aligned more with the funder's requirements and less about the newcomers' needs (Mukhtar et al., 2016).

Geographical barriers also pose a challenge for the uptake and utilization of settlement services, because of either non-existent or failing public infrastructure, or the location of agencies (Mukhtar et al., 2016). Thus, a broader regional distribution of immigrants carries with it a cost. For instance, the infrastructure and social support networks need to be in place in smaller communities; diversity issues need to be addressed; and, beyond job opportunities, there needs to be a general welcoming feeling, especially as many newcomers will not have the social support networks of a larger ethnic or social group they can join (Carter et al., 2008). Although municipalities have no legislative authority in the area of immigration, many have introduced local strategies and programs to attract newcomers and facilitate their integration (Carter et al., 2008). Apart from municipalities, there are plenty of community, faith-based, and ethnocultural organizations across Canada that work to support and help immigrants with the transition process, such as finding suitable housing to accessing health care, employment, recreational services, and education (Carter et al., 2008).

Hypothesis 3: In rural areas, a diversity of formal and informal organizations substitute/complement governmental settlement organizations.

METHODS AND DATA

This section draws on the results of two research studies, which both took place in the Canadian Prairies and respectively investigated the motivations of rural SME employers to hire international immigrants and international immigrants' integration in rural communities. The two datasets show meaningful overlaps; their combination contributes to the understanding of international immigrants' well-being in rural areas. In this article, we mostly use the qualitative data of the two aforementioned research studies to better understand the role of mediating organizations in the creation of shared meanings among international immigrants, rural SME employers, and settlement organizations. Because only permanent residents can access settlement services, we focus on international immigrants who have been granted permanent residency to analyze the interactions that have been forged with mediating organizations. Since 2016, ~60% of the immigrants who have been granted permanent residency in Canada have entered through the economic class (Statistics Canada, 2017a; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019b), which is consistent with the objective to shed light on economic integration. In this section, we present the methods used in each study before detailing the research field, the dataset, and the two samples.

Methods

The SME employers' motivations study consisted of an online survey made of three sets of questions (Salmon et al., 2019). A first set consisted of seven-point Likert-scale questions investigating the motivations of rural SME employers to hire international immigrants. A second set of four open-ended questions collected information about benefits of hiring immigrants, challenges for hiring immigrants, employers' actions to retain newcomers, and employers' needs for hiring immigrants. A third set gathered characteristics of SMEs and SME owners.

The integration study aimed to compare the integration dynamics of newcomers, defined as both international immigrants and Canadian residents, in rural communities. For the sake of this article, only the data concerning international immigrants are mobilized. It consisted of in-depth semidirected interviews, which lasted, on average, 1 h, with immigrants who had settled in the rural Canadian Prairies as well as with organizations that support immigrants' landing in rural communities. For immigrants, the interview was based on the premise that each integration trajectory is individualized. Immigrants were differentiated based on their seniority in the community (landing took place within the last 2 years, between 2 and 5 years ago, or more than 5 years ago). One representative of each category was interviewed in each community. The research team asked participants to design a timeline highlighting the steps that they perceived as meaningful in their integration process (economic, social, health, political,

and educational experiences). These data collection tool was inspired by mental mapping techniques and grounded theory approaches (Akimowicz et al., 2016). **Figure 1** below shows an example of the timelines that were collected. Based on the assumption that settlement organizations had a sort of standard procedure to welcome newcomers, the data collection procedure for organizations was initially similar to the one of newcomers. However, the research team quickly realized this was not the case and instead used an analysis grid that enabled the characterization of organizations' actions during the settlement process. This grid was composed of four blocks, which respectively tackled the goals sought by organizations, the related activities implemented by organizations, the feedback received from newcomers, and the opportunities and threats faced by organizations.

Data

Both studies were conducted in the rural Canadian Prairies. The data for the rural employers' motivations study were collected between August and December 2018, whereas the data for the integration study were collected between July and September 2019. The Canadian Prairies is a vast geographical area delineated by the Rocky Mountains at the west and the Canadian Shield at the East. It is administratively divided into three provinces, namely, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba from West to East. The region is economically specialized in the agricultural production of oilseed and grain with some intensive meat production in the three Provinces and extensive ranching in Alberta. The energy industry, while present all over the Canadian Prairies, is particularly developed in Alberta. In 2016, the three provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan had the highest shares of population born outside of Canada with an average of ~8% of their population (Statistics Canada, 2016b). Moreover, the largest visible minorities[3] in the Prairies were the Filipinos, the southern Asians, and the Blacks, who, respectively, represented 37, 16, and 15% of non–metro-visible minorities outside of census metropolitan areas (Statistics Canada, 2016c).

Statistics Canada's definition of rural was used; it excludes large urban population centers exceeding 100,000 inhabitants, which in our case led to the exclusion of Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer in Alberta, Regina and Saskatoon in Saskatchewan, and Winnipeg in Manitoba. The low population of the rural Canadian Prairies, 3 million inhabitants, is aging with limited incomes. In this context, immigration is envisioned as a lever to revitalize rural areas with the settlement of new populations. In particular, efforts are made to retain immigrants in rural areas, which is highlighted by Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program and the launch in 2019 of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot. The rural Canadian Prairies therefore provide an interesting case study for unpacking the question of international immigrants' well-being.

The online survey of the SME employers' motivations study was primarily advertised by the service provider organizations

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[3]The definition of visible minorities follows the federal Employment Equity Act of Canada. For more information, please visit https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/E-5.401/
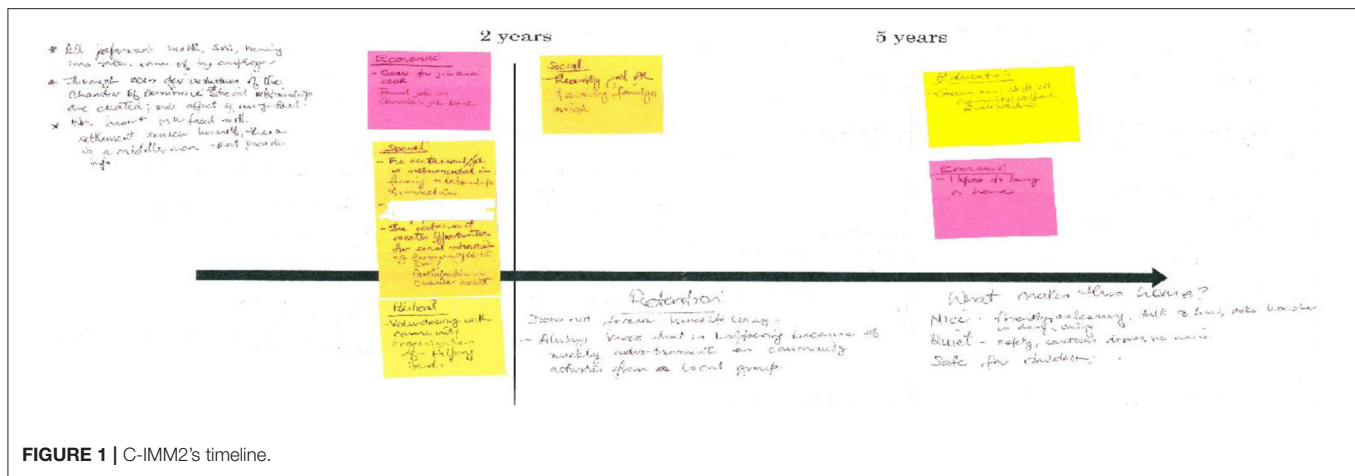
FIGURE 1 | C-IMM2's timeline.

(SPOs), which are local settlement organizations, in each province.[4] The research team also mobilized other organizations, which maintain frequent contacts with business representatives (e.g., local Chambers of Commerce and sector organizations) to collect more responses. SMEs responded on a voluntary basis. In the end, 112 questionnaires were usable for the analysis (15 from Alberta, 21 from Saskatchewan, and 76 from Manitoba). **Appendix 1** depicts respondents' experience with international immigrant labor. The SME representatives' responses are coded using the following standard Province-BX, where X is the number of the business B. AB stands for Alberta, MB for Manitoba, SK for Saskatchewan.

The participants of the integration study were selected using a different approach. First, each Prairie Province was assigned an economic function (tourism for Alberta, agriculture for Saskatchewan, and agro-industry for Manitoba). In each province, two rural communities were selected based on the fact that they host actors of the aforementioned industries, which led to the selection of Banff (B) and Cochrane (C) in Alberta, Moose Jaw (MJ) and Weyburn (W) in Saskatchewan, and Neepawa (N), and Portage la Prairie (PlP) in Manitoba. In each community, the research team aimed to interview at least three representatives of organizations welcoming international immigrants (ORG) and three international immigrants (IMM) selected based on their seniority in the community. Immigrants were permanent residents for permanent residents only can access settlement services. While representatives of welcoming organizations (**Appendix 2**) were selected through online searches and discussions with community leaders, international immigrants were selected through contacts with SPOs. International immigrants and organizations welcoming immigrants were selected through contacts with Local Immigration Partnerships (when present in the community) or community leaders otherwise.

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[4]The research team worked hand in hand with the provincial umbrella organizations (AAISA in Alberta, SAISIA in Saskatchewan, and MANSO in Manitoba), which shared the survey link to their respective SPOs.

RESULTS

This section is organized to depict the complexity of the interdependencies existing among immigrants, the materiality of their environment, and the immateriality of their social relationships with the host society. The results highlight first the challenges stemming from immigrants' adjustment to their new cultural environment. It continues with the ideas that this adjustment is facilitated by settlement organizations and complemented by a dense network of other organizations. Finally, the retention of international immigrants appears to take place when all the rural actors dialectically and positively respond to the arrival of immigrants.

The Challenges of Landing in a Rural Place

All the participants (immigrants, immigration organizations, and employers) acknowledged that language plays a critical role in the integration process. B-IMM1 shared that he "keep[s] saying English because […] immigrants come to BV with very little English that kind of makes it hard for them to integrate and find a job or, you know, just get involved in the community." This perspective was confirmed by 68% of interviewed employers, who identified language as a challenge for hiring immigrants. More than half of the immigrants interviewed also indicated that language can foster misunderstandings and conflicts between immigrant employees, employers, and domestic employees, which materialized, for instance, through perceived preferential treatment by the employer toward either party, the inability to take service calls on their own in different locations, prejudices from customers who refuse service from immigrants due to their language limitations, or even domestic employees' feelings of exclusion when immigrant employees speak their native language. Overall, the language barrier tended to complicate immigrants' jobs on the premise that the time needed to relay information and ensure understanding could affect productivity, a situation that was exacerbated when industry-specific knowledge was required.

A few other operating issues were mentioned by the participants as hindering one's ability to integrate. The top

issue was transportation as hosting communities lacked public transportation allowing access to surrounding areas. W-IMM2 explained that "you might have a community that is only 15 min from another community, but if they don't have a way to get to that community [...] we have taxis, but there isn't like a public transit [...] there is not a continuous demand." Of the immigrants interviewed, three also talked about their inability to follow through on desirable financial opportunities (e.g., mortgages, credit) because of their immigration status. Overall, adjusting to the Canadian financial system was perceived as another obstacle to integration. As B-IMM2 explained, "All these opportunities are opening up for you [...] it's just so easy now with your credit cards [...]. The first thing that immigrants need to learn is how to handle their finances, because aside from our daily expenses here, most of the people I know, at least from my country, we support families back home. So, if you don't handle your finances well, you're gonna go into debt." Time management and the devaluation of immigrant's education or work credentials were also mentioned consistently.

In face of these challenges, almost every immigrant noted they had experienced major life changes as a result of their relocation. For them, changing the way they do some things was critical to being happy or successful in their current communities. Meaningful changes involved modifying the way they eat, "I can't get the food. [...] And the only way you do get Jamaican food here, it's so expensive. I can't. They were selling one [bun] for $10, can you believe? (laughs). Yeah, for somebody to get Jamaican foods here, it's very expensive" MJ-IMM2; commute, "It's in Makati City, it's a business center. So we just have to ride any transportation. It's not, not the same here that we are living in the countryside. I don't have a driver's license too" N-IMM1; and exercise, "learn new things, learn about Canadian culture and its landscape and all that. So I tried different things. First, I started to take the opportunity and go bike and hike and all that [...] so I can learn about the environment, about the community and meet like-minded people" (B-IMM1). Overall, the quest for happiness was perceived as their responsibility and their ability to handle change, which was qualified by adjectives such as being brave or smart, was critical: "I must, it's not need, I must make my life like I had in my country [...] I wanna feel [a] full life" (W-IMM1). They also recognized that engaging in activities such as educational advancement and upskilling were important to their state of wellness.

Settlement Organizations at Your Service

The critical role of settlement organizations was well-recognized among immigrant interviewees. Indeed, all of them shared positive feedback about the services they had received from settlement organizations, such as B-IMM1, who explained that "if you're a newcomer in town [...], when you come to Settlement Services you know that the people that work there, they have similar stories to yours, that they will understand [...] that they'll try to find the best approach. So, and that's a service available in town, which is amazing." Personnel from the organizations intended to build a privileged relationship with immigrants. Although there was no formalized procedure, they usually started with a needs assessment that aimed to individualize support and then referred immigrants to adequate experts or resource services according to identified needs. Their reliance on an extensive network of partners was embedded in their recognition of the multifaceted aspects of settlement and integration. Even though their mandate may focus on the most urgent needs encountered by immigrants after landing in rural Canada, they regularly went past their mandate, which sometimes involved using *ad-hoc* resources, "we use our volunteers to offer other people to benefit from these services" (PlP-ORG1).

The core activities of settlement organizations were to support immigrants to go through the basic administrative formalities that would facilitate their integration into the Canadian society, such as getting a Social Insurance Number and health coverage, as well as enabling immigrants to cover their basic needs, such as finding accommodation and securing a job. For a newly landed immigrant, finding a job was both a vital step to provide for the basic needs and a major challenge: "So to speak it's a survival, we were in survival mode, right? So we're here for jobs, and we don't really have time for anything else. Like, I only had one job back then but most people I know, friends I know, they hold two jobs so you don't really have time to, you know to socialize" (B-IMM2). In this regard, settlement organization personnel lavished advice to help international immigrants design CVs and write résumés that match Canadian employers' standards. They also helped immigrants identify overlooked strengths and experiences that could be valued during interviews. Interviews resonated particularly challenging for immigrants who shared making lots of efforts to soften their accent and behave according to their perception of accepted Canadian standards: "I adapt. Like it's harder at first, but then I seem to pull myself together to adapt to where I'm functioning [...] It just takes time, but it happens." (W-IMM3).

The fulfillment of these needs highlights an invisible cultural barrier that slowed down the integration process, which is well-exemplified by the international kitchens organized by W-ORG3 that enabled local Canadians to relate to newcomers' trajectories and realize the cultural differences that exist. Often tacit for most individuals of the host society, this cultural barrier was an essential background knowledge that sounded difficult to gain by immigrants. In order to overcome this barrier, settlement organization personnel attempted to build bridges between the host society and immigrants. Their goal was to facilitate the acquisition of cultural norms through experience in a safe social space. A variety of activities were organized based on available resources, people's skills, and local interests. A glimpse of these activities includes potlucks, dance nights, women nights, discussion tandems, discussion groups, and outdoor activities that all enable immigrants to value their own culture and capacities. For settlement organization personnel, building these social relationships appeared to be an essential part of immigrants' integration process. These activities tended to result in a feeling of independence stemming from a more comfortable navigation of social life in rural Canada, which sometimes could be tied to intangible statuses such as being a homeowner as PlP-IMM1 explained, "If you are able to buy a property over here (...) the country trusts you, right. If they trust you, you're part of it. (...) That's a little piece of Canada."

However, this was not necessarily a panacea as this learning process was not neutral. The host society may not necessarily respond or may even respond negatively. In half of the communities, interviews highlighted tensions between immigrants and the host society, which, in some cases, led to the formation of ethnic enclaves or a perceived feeling of racism. For instance, employers shared that "the intellectual people we serve do not understand newcomers" (MB-B27), that "some clients are resistant to accepting service from newcomers" (MB-B64), or even that "there was a client [immigrant], his tires were punctured" (W-ORG3). This socialization could also lead to tensions within the household, which was the case for C-IMM1 whose "husband did not know English at all. [She] had to do everything, all the paperwork, and explain everything to him. They call [her] the boss. It was very difficult." In the communities under investigation, other organizations also provided valuable support.

A Dense Network of Supporting Organizations

During the study, a wide diversity of organizations other than settlement organizations appeared to contribute as well to the integration of international immigrants in Canada. In a more or less purposive manner, all these actors facilitated the acquisition of rural Canada background knowledge. Usually, they responded to needs that were not directly tackled by settlement organizations or added value to the services already provided by settlement organizations. Although, in some rare cases, the provision of community services was redundant to services provided to immigrants only, in most cases, the network of organizations and the referral system avoided such redundancies. Actors' motivation and intentionality varied in a great manner. For instance, PlP-ORG3, a real estate agent, facilitated access to her network of financial establishments in the perspective of sealing a deal, which, at the same time, contributed to immigrants' financial literacy. The faith-based MJ-ORG2 and immigration B-ORG3 organizations emphasized the lack of transportation in rural areas, which had resulted in informal and formal transportation services, respectively.

On the one hand, some of these complementary organizations seem to be more culture-sensitive. Often composed of former immigrants or members who acknowledge the hardship of establishing a new life in a foreign country (MJ-ORG2, MJ-ORG3, N-ORG3), these organizations provide a friendly atmosphere for sharing experience, playing down the hiccups of starting a new life in a new country, and providing mental health support and counseling to respond to immigrants' depressing loss of autonomy. For instance, it helped W-IMM3 who explained, "I didn't have my license transferred over to Canada. [...] They wouldn't let me get it [the license] until I got all this stuff situated. [...] So I just kinda had a little bit of depression for the first... like probably a year or so, [...] just like you have that cabin fever and you're just like mopey and stuff" or N-IMM3 who explained, "actually you know what, for the first 5 months I feel depressed that it's so hard. [It was] sad for me that it's really hard to find a job. Yeah, it's really struggling that whether you

like it or not, [this is now] your hometown, you need to accept this." This supportive environment enabled sharing knowledge in culturally appropriate manners, which was not always the case in settlement organizations despite all the efforts made by the personnel to demonstrate respect to immigrants' otherness (e.g., women nights). However, these networks were also susceptible to slowing down the integration process when the refuge they provide may lock in the participants in a cultural comfort zone that was too comfortable to depart from. C-IMM1 found that "if you stay with Syrians, you won't be growing. They are still connected to each other. They could not absorb. [...] It is hard for them to accept different traditions and ways of thinking."

The workplace was another significant place for secondary socialization, which contrary to the previous organizations was much less culturally sensitive. While employers acknowledged several barriers and cultural gaps affecting the integration of international immigrants in their workforce, they also emphasized all the benefits of working with them. For instance, MB-B72 recognized that they "have managed to employ some incredibly loyal and hardworking employees who were newcomers." Consequently, they provided services that can foster the integration of international immigrants and facilitate relationships among workers. The sometimes distant settlement organizations were not always easily accessible for immigrants who did not necessarily have a driving license or individual transportation. As a matter of fact, employers acted as substitutes that provided settlement services. For instance, employers shared doing language training, opportunities for credentialing, furthering studies, or buying tools. They also emphasized paying special attention to maintaining an inclusive work environment and regretted tensions stemming from wrongly interpreted actions among coworkers.

Toward a Dialectical Transformation of Rural Places

Results also suggest a multilevel transformation of both the immigrants themselves, the businesses where immigrants work, and the community that host immigrants. While the interrelations happening at the workplace tended to create opportunities to engage culturally: "getting feedback in the workplace and being able to read people's [non-verbal clues] and body language help with how to communicate with different people from different cultural backgrounds" (B-IMM1), having multiple jobs, which was the case for several interviewees, prevented participation in leisure activities where the socialization process could take place in a more friendly manner. For unemployed immigrants, creating their own activities helped them engage with other newcomers and locals alike: "I was a little bored and like I needed to find something to meet people and learn about Canmore [...] I joined meetup.com. [...] So, I started my own. I love walking in the mornings. So, I started Canmore Social Morning Walk" (B-IMM1). However, most interviewed immigrants did not find it easy to engage with their new cultural environment, primarily because they did not know where to make these positive connections: "I found a connection with my job, and it's fulfilling for me. That's

when I started to [...] be more aware of what's going on, the services and the programs that are out there available" (B-IMM2). Interestingly, many immigrants perceived that one has to be smart and brave (C-IMM1, W-IMM1) in order to create connections or achieve a fulfilling life.

For participating employers, the valuable changes immigrants bring in the workplace are workforce stability, economic benefits, and workplace diversity, along with strong values and work ethics: "My staff is more stable. Hiring newcomers has assisted us in filling vacancies within our agency; 75% of our employees would be considered newcomers" SK-B90. For 52% of the respondents, the stability and economic benefits stemming from immigrants' capacity to fill labor shortages decreased turnover rates, reduced vacancies, and boosted employee retention while it boosted staff morale and created a sense of security to stay with the company. "[Newcomers] fill extreme labor shortages that in turn offer stability and therefore retain the Canadian workers we have on staff, particularly managers. Otherwise, they would have quit long ago" MB-B44. Economically, it allowed companies to undertake more jobs thereby increasing their sales/revenue: "I have a more stable workforce that has correlated with increased sales" MB-B26, as well as attract new customers: "We have just over 30% diverse hiring and many are new Canadians [...] a main benefit is that they help my business to better reflect the changing community [...] and that keeps us relevant to the marketplace" MB-B30. This created space for immigrants to share new perspectives to create new business opportunities: "Sometimes they bring a new perspective to the store and illuminate some opportunities for us" SK-B89. Many employers (40%) mentioned immigrants' strong work ethics and problem-solving capacities: "I have hired loyal, hardworking employees, who are willing to work, and appreciate the opportunity to work" MB-B46. An attitude of other-centeredness is developed that "help[s] everyone to look beyond their own needs to consider others. That outward mindset fosters inclusiveness, gratefulness, [and] appreciation for differences of all types" MB-B19.

Results finally suggest that changes in the workplace spilled over into the community, usually through the family members that immigrants bring with them. Facilitating newcomers through employment kept rural businesses opened: "Without newcomers, we pretty much wouldn't exist" MB-B10. The settlement of immigrants "has changed my rural community in the 20-plus years since I moved here... it is a place for our children who wanted to leave to a diverse community [that has] winter festivals, tribal days, and huge national events" MB-B22. Employers' attitude toward immigrants was often translated into activities that reflect communities' attitudes of openness and welcome: "Our city helps newcomers right from the minute they inquire through to rides from the airport to accommodations, to finding jobs, to get-together evenings. The city of Morden goes over and above to welcome newcomers" MB-B10. Different community groups (e.g., churches, settlement organizations, support groups) rallied together to solve issues that affect newcomers and the community alike: "Portage Learning Centre is the best example, as they are doing an awesome job. I myself do volunteer work as a Settlement Partner with newcomers to improve their language skills and how to

adapt to the new environment in life. We work on various problems as a team and try to solve them" MB-B17. One community had even established a not-for-profit to address newcomer needs: "Build a Village is an organization within the community that specifically helps refugees" MB-B20. Important to one employer AB-B111 were the "lifelong friendships" that were forged.

DISCUSSION

The results shed light on both immigrant integration processes and rural employers' involvement in the retention of international immigrants. The challenge of the utilization of two datasets emanating from two different research studies was overcome by the design of an original iterative data analysis process, inspired by an abductive perspective, during which the assumptions have been adjusted several times to the diversity of the materials. This process enabled us to take advantage of both the quantitative data of the employers' motivations study and the qualitative data of the rural integration study. Even though the nature of the studies was complementary, employers interviewed in the first study were not necessarily employers of immigrants in the second study. These results could be complemented with a survey addressed to immigrants landing in rural areas to better quantify the importance of dialectical relationships with immigrant organizations, employers, and other residents. Such a study would eventually lead to the identification of subgroups of immigrants based on the nature of the dialectical relationship they entertain. In addition, it would be interesting to shed more light with a qualitative analysis on the relationships that exist between rural employers and immigrant organizations to better understand sectoral opportunities and challenges.

The utilization of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) secondary socialization concept was primarily motivated by the goal to better understand the role of mediating organizations during the integration of international immigrants and their impact on immigrants' well-being. It provides an opportunity to conduct a meso-level analysis that goes beyond the multiculturalist view of acculturation, "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et al., 1936: p.149), and the assimilationist view of segmented assimilation, as described earlier. While the former enables a distinction between four trajectories (i.e., integration, assimilation, marginalization, and rejection), the latter enables an articulation of the influence of macro-social structures (e.g., culture, power relationships) with micro-behaviors (e.g., internalization, conformism). The meso-level stance adopted with the utilization of the concept of secondary socialization facilitates the simultaneous consideration of these aspects through interactions existing among social actors. On this specific point, the investigation of the role of food, understood as an unanimated mediating factor of acculturation, appears particularly promising. The difficulties for accessing culturally appropriated food, which appeared to be a significant factor of social inclusiveness during events such as

international kitchens, resonated particularly strongly to most participating immigrants.

Immigrants' credentials, which foster successful immigration, appear devalued or unrecognized when immigrants enter Canada, compounding their ability to gain employment that matches their qualifications and experience. Employers perceive the benefits of hiring newcomers, but are limited in realizing their full potential economically. Most immigrants shared accepting the devaluation of their credentials due to personal priorities or cultural orientation. While one immigrant noted choosing between credential revaluation and mortgage payments, another looked at it as a start-over. Devaluation and non-recognition are common in both regulated and unregulated professions (Kaushik and Drolet, 2018) and are referred to as the glass ceiling, the effect of having limited socioeconomic mobility in their careers; glass floor, the stagnancy in lower wage and position jobs, and glass wall, being on the outside despite attempts to enter the building (Guo, 2013). Half of all the immigrants commented on their inability to further their education, suggesting the deep ties education may have on integration. The positive correlation between economic integration (job satisfaction) and immigrant well-being may purport that gratitude for employment does not equate to immigrants' satisfaction and fulfillment. The frustration associated with discontent may contribute to a decline in overall health and more so mental health. Seemingly, settlement organizations have intervened to match pieces of previous skills with available jobs, but there is no strategy in place to fully utilize immigrants' skills set.

Neoliberal policy reforms happening in rural parts across Canada have also started to change the social and immigration landscape. These changes have brought about challenges in the uptake and utilization of services received by immigrants, but they also pose challenges for the organizations that offer services. As highlighted by our interlocutors, nearly half of participating organizations mentioned the restrictions that are placed on them by funding bodies. Some organizations had to combine federal and provincial funding in order to cover as many people as possible, or in some rural areas, in order to offer the programs at all. Therefore, immigrants found themselves having to adapt to a system that is expected to help them integrate into their host communities (Wilson-Forsberg, 2015). Immigration appears not to be a humanitarian endeavor, but rather an economic one, which consists of selecting applicants with training, work experience, language ability, and investment potential to make a positive contribution to the provincial economy (Carter et al., 2008). While the value an immigrant brings is hardly understood, even through a nominee program, the emphasis of current immigration policies seems to focus on local actors' economic needs. An aspect of this deprivation can be immobility, which leaves many people stranded within local, rural communities and forces others to employ complex strategies to access facilities and services that are not readily accessible (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014).

CONCLUSION

In this article, we explored the complexity of international immigrants' well-being during their integration in Canada with a focus on economic integration. We blended the results of two independent researches, respectively investigating employers' motivations to hire immigrants from a quantitative point of view and immigrants' integration from a qualitative point of view in the Prairie Provinces in Canada. While the quantitative data about employers' motivations support the idea that immigrants' well-being depends on intertwined social processes taking place in rural communities, the qualitative data provide a deeper understanding of both the challenges faced by immigrants and the support provided by various stakeholders of immigrants' integration.

These results emphasize the efforts that are made by rural stakeholders to facilitate immigrants' integration to the extent of their capacities. While the results confirm that economic integration is critical for immigrants' well-being to provide for themselves and their families, they also highlight the importance of economic integration for social and cultural well-being. In rural communities where resources can be scarce, immigrant's well-being is supported by the relationships immigrants develop within their community and magnified by the interdependencies that can emerge. In other words, the results suggest that a successful immigration, which would see international immigrants, settle, integrate, and remain in rural areas because they feel well, relies on a dialectical transformation of rural areas where secondary socialization of both immigrants and the hosts would take place.

The highlight of mediating organizations' critical roles for international immigrants' well-being leads to several questions. A closer look at interactions among mediating organizations could enhance the understanding of both international immigrants and organizations' needs. The governance of such complex, diversified, and place-based networks is a critical stake. The Local Immigration Partnerships initiative, which is based on the acknowledgment of networked organizations, is likely to benefit immigrants. While there is a risk that a too tight network of organizations may lack flexibility, thereby inducing immigrants' internalization of the dominant culture without having the possibility to share meaningfully their own identities, improving networking appears to facilitate the mobilization of local capacities. Understanding the dynamics of such networks could also help to design industrial and agricultural rural policies based on the idea of pooled resources shared within a network, which could enhance the development of remote rural areas where low density and long distances structure any initiative.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Of the original contributions collected during the study, significant ones are included in the article. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Brandon University Research Ethics Committee. The patients/participants provided informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1 | Characteristics of the SME sample.

Descriptor	Survey responses from SME owners				
	Responses	Average	Median	Min.	Max.
Number of employees	62	68	20	0	492
Number of newcomers employed	57	23	7	0	200
1st year a newcomer was employed	50	2010	2011	1995	2,017

APPENDIX 2 | Characteristics of participating organizations.

Province	Community	Code	Organization	Role
Alberta	Banff	B-ORG1	Bow Valley Immigration Partnership	Immigration
Alberta	Banff	B-ORG2	Bow Valley Parent Link	Parenting
Alberta	Banff	B-ORG3	Bow Valley Settlement Services	Immigration
Alberta	Cochrane	C-ORG1	Alberta Works	Employment
Alberta	Cochrane	C-ORG2	Rocky View Immigrant Services	Immigration
Alberta	Cochrane	C-ORG3	Rocky View School Division	Education
Saskatchewan	Moose Jaw	MJ-ORG1	Hillcrest Church	Culture
Saskatchewan	Moose Jaw	MJ-ORG2	Islamic Association of Saskatchewan	Culture
Saskatchewan	Moose Jaw	MJ-ORG3	Moose Jaw Multicultural Council	Culture
Saskatchewan	Weyburn	W-ORG1	Settlement Workers in Schools	Education
Saskatchewan	Weyburn	W-ORG2	Southeast College	Education
Saskatchewan	Weyburn	W-ORG3	Southeast Newcomer Services	Immigration
Manitoba	Neepawa	N-ORG1	Town of Neepawa	Community management
Manitoba	Neepawa	N-ORG2	Neepawa and Area Immigrant Settlement Services	Immigration
Manitoba	Neepawa	N-ORG3	St. Dominic's Church	Culture
Manitoba	Portage la Prairie	PIP-ORG1	Portage Learning and Literacy Centre	Immigration
Manitoba	Portage la Prairie	PIP-ORG2	Central Mental Health Association	Health
Manitoba	Portage la Prairie	PIP-ORG3	Royal le Page Realty	Housing

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The Regional Migration-Development Nexus in Australia: What Migration? Whose Development?

Martina Boese * and Anthony Moran

Department of Social Inquiry, La Trobe University, Bundoora, VIC, Australia

Both regional resettlement of refugees, and the attraction of different kinds of migrant labor to regional areas, have been significant trends in Australia's recent migration policies. Using the concept of the migration-development nexus, we address important questions about the nature and scope of development these different policies aim to promote, and achieve. We examine the intersection of policies and initiatives implemented to encourage and support refugee settlement and regional migration in Australia with the perspectives of regionally settled migrants and refugees on their regional migration outcomes. We argue that recent government policies, and multi-stakeholder initiatives aimed at regional migration and/or settlement, cast migrants as differential contributors to regional development, useful either in terms of their skills (skilled migrants) or their labor (backpackers, seasonal workers, refugees). The co-presence of different groups of migrants in regional locations is also shaped by the fluctuating employer demands for mobile labor in combination with visa regulations. We draw on data from three projects on regional settlement, multiculturalism and mobilities to analyze three important elements of regional migration that are central to a critical analysis of the nexus between rural migration and development in regional Australia: the complex roles of employers; the embedding of regional migration in migrants' life courses; and the tension between long-term migration outcomes and quick fixes. By focusing on development as it is experienced by migrants themselves and interpreted by different stakeholders in regional migration, we draw attention to the limitations of a purely instrumental view of migrants as agents of regional development. We argue that the sustainability of regional migration policies will depend on recognizing the important role of migrants' hopes, needs and aspirations as well as their rights, and the unintended human costs and consequences of exclusively economically driven migration policy design.

Keywords: Australia, employment, migration-development nexus, migration policies, multiculturalism, refugees, rural migration, temporary migration

INTRODUCTION

Regional resettlement of refugees, and attracting migrant workers to regional areas, are significant recent trends in Australian migration policies, raising important questions about the nature and scope of development these different policies aim to achieve, and actually achieve. Increasingly, all levels of government, policy consultants, think tanks and

scholars cast regional migration[1] as a "win-win" scenario in Australia. Rural communities experiencing population decline and labor and skills shortages are seen as benefitting from migrant settlement and labor (Regional Australia Institute, 2018; Tudge, 2019; Joint Standing Committee on Migration, 2020). Migrants and refugees are said to find employment more easily than in urban locations (similar to other countries, traditionally the major settlement locations for new arrivals). What is less clear than governmental promotion of regional and rural migration, and the acknowledged contribution of migrants and refugees to local economies and productivity in regional Australia (Collins et al., 2016), is how migrants themselves experience the outcomes of regional migration. These experiences are, however, relevant for the social and economic sustainability of such policies and initiatives, which is evident in policy makers' concern with migrants' retention in regional areas (Wulff and Dharmalingam, 2008; Krivokapic-Skoko and Collins, 2016). This paper investigates the relationship between regional migration policy aims and the varied experiences of different categories of migrants at the center of the regional migration-development nexus. The key question pursued is adapted from Raghuram's (2009) question on the nexus between migration and international development[2]. Raghuram draws attention to migrants' own development rather than the development of their countries of origin in assessing the development outcomes of international migration. We suggest in a similar manner to extend the question about the development outcomes of regional migration beyond regional economies to migrants themselves. In other words, what kind of development can regional migration afford to migrants? We explore this question by asking more specifically: how is regional migrants' development shaped by employers? How can we assess the development outcomes of regional migration in the context of migrants' life courses? And finally, how does the tension between short- and long-term outcomes affect an assessment of development via regional migration?

This paper provides a combined analysis of policies and initiatives devised to either encourage labor migration or increase refugee settlement in rural Australia; perspectives on rural migration outcomes of key stakeholders involved with migration or settlement support processes; and perspectives of regionally settled migrants and refugees themselves. Drawing on our own research into regional settlement in Australia conducted between 2010 and 2020, we posit that a better understanding of the development outcomes of rural and regional migration requires consideration of diverse, partly intersecting and partly opposed interests of different stakeholders and how they shape migration outcomes. Our analysis of the experience of regional migration and settlement outcomes according to migrants and refugees, accessed through their own accounts in interviews and focus groups, and according to other stakeholders in regional Australia, also highlights the importance of studying the different target groups of regional migration and settlement as co-residents and as social and economic actors with varying hopes, needs and aspirations.

We begin with an overview of regional migration and settlement policies, distinguishing between regulation of regional labor migration ("skilled" and "unskilled"), and of refugee resettlement in Australia. Next, we review key research findings on regional migration experiences for migrants and refugees in Australia in the context of international scholarship on rural migration, focusing on analysis of employment, and socio-cultural dimensions of regional settlement. We introduce the "migration-development nexus" as a lens for analyzing outcomes of regional migration. After describing the research projects on which this paper draws, we discuss three influences on regional migration outcomes, which in our view need to be considered alongside each other in an analysis of the regional migration-development nexus. Firstly, the central and multidimensional roles of employers as key stakeholders and beneficiaries of regional migration; secondly, the embedding of regional migration in migrants' life courses; and thirdly, the tension between long-term regional migration outcomes and quick fixes. The paper concludes by highlighting the risks of reducing regional migrants to agents of regional economic development and by arguing for a combined analysis of different target groups of regional migration policies.

AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL MIGRATION AND REGIONAL REFUGEE SETTLEMENT: A POLICY REVIEW

The Australian government separated its migration program from its humanitarian program in 1983 to distinguish its humanitarian obligations from its domestic, social and economic migration goals (Galligan et al., 2014). Economic imperatives have shaped Australian migration policies since the 1980s (Walsh, 2011) and regional migration policies strongly reflect this. Australia is internationally renowned as a highly selective, skills-oriented and demand-based immigration country, second after Canada to introduce a points-test to screen migrants based on their qualifications, language skills and professional experience. While family migration has persisted alongside skills-based migration, the latter has dominated the migrant intake since the late 1990s, evident in a disproportionate growth of permanent skilled, business and, more recently, temporary migration. Within the "skilled migration" category, employers are an ever-growing influence on intake through the

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[1]In this paper "regional migration" refers to both direct migration from overseas and secondary migration of people with migrant backgrounds from another place in Australia to a rural or regional location. The latter category includes people from forced migration backgrounds, and in terms of their legal status this means recognized refugees, humanitarian visa holders and asylum seekers. For the purpose of regional visas, the Australian Department of Home Affairs classes "most locations of Australia outside major cities (Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane)" as designated regional areas for migration purposes.

[2]The term "migration-development nexus" describes the relationship between migration and development, in particular the impact of migration on development, which has been debated for several decades and variably interpreted by policy makers, practitioners and scholars (see f. ex. Bastia, 2018).

relative and absolute growth of employer-sponsored visas and the introduction of skills-lists based on employer demand (Galligan et al., 2014). Finally, the generous admission of temporary migrants since the late 1990s also followed the rationale of admitting the migrants needed by specific Australian industry sectors as long as they are required by employers, without granting them the social entitlements enjoyed by permanent residents. At any point there is an estimated one million temporary visa holders in Australia (Mares, 2016), which also reveals another lesser known dimension of Australia's migration policies. Alongside nominal labor migration programs such as the temporary skilled program, temporary visa holders include several other groups not screened through occupation-lists and points-tests, yet providing critical and numerically significant pools of labor for unskilled and low-skilled jobs in sectors such as hospitality, horticulture and food processing. This includes holders of international student visas, Working Holiday- and Work and Holiday-visas which are thus de facto labor migration programs, expanding the economic orientation of Australia's migration policies beyond dedicated and skills-focused labor migration programs (Tham et al., 2016).

Regional and rural Australia is where all the mentioned categories of migrants are in high demand and where government policies have aimed to direct them. In a settler colonial country, overseas migration to regional locations goes back to Australia's initial colonization (Butler and Ben, 2020). Migrants and migrant labor in particular have shaped regional Australia long before the more recent targeted regional migration policies, from the long presence of Chinese migrants in regional Victoria to the forced farm labor of Pacific Islanders from the 1860s in Queensland, known as "blackbirding" (Stead and Altman, 2019) to different waves of seasonal workers in the 20th century across Australia. However, from the late 1990s until now, the rural migration of "skilled migrants" has been incentivized through different regional migration visas, skilled regional visas (most recently, Australian Government, 2019), and also state-led regional skilled migration initiatives (for example State Government of Victoria, 2007). The lower points-threshold for regional visas has been an important attraction for applicants, who are variably tied to a specific–regionally based - employer or to a regional location for the visa-duration. Alongside these policies, the already mentioned Working Holiday (WHV)- and Work and Holiday-visas have provided key policy tools to attract "flexible" and highly mobile migrant labor to orchards, farms, packing sheds and hospitality businesses in regional Australia. The 12-months WHV, in particular, comes with the option to apply for a second year-visa on the condition of having worked for 88 days in a regional location in the first year. Regional employer demand for horticultural workers has also been addressed by the Seasonal Worker Program (piloted in 2009) and the Pacific Labor scheme (introduced in 2018) which brings workers from several Pacific Islands[3] for fixed-term periods to

employers who participate in the Scheme (Australian Government, 2020), intended to produce development benefits via remittances for the participant Pacific Island state economies (World Bank, 2006). It is worth noting that the earlier discussed skilled visas allow migrants to bring their partners and dependents, while the later-mentioned Working Holiday, Seasonal worker- and Pacific Labor schemes do not, expecting the workers to depart again - and (in the case of the Seasonal worker and Pacific Labor schemes) to invest in - their overseas home.

Alongside these policies, the federal government in Australia has also implemented the direct resettlement of "unlinked" refugees (i.e., refugees without pre-existing family connections in Australia) in selected regional towns in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland since the early 2000s, led by the Department of Home Affairs and its predecessors. Other groups of former refugees have been relocated from metro Melbourne to selected regional towns, in joint initiatives of some city-based community sector organizations and rural employers, local governments and/or service providers (see f. ex. Taylor and Stanovic, 2005). Some of these initiatives have turned out to be short-lived while a few others have been hailed as successful blueprints for rural revitalization through refugee settlement (AMES Australia and Deloitte Access Economics, 2015). Efforts to facilitate the relocation of refugees from capital cities to regional and rural towns have grown over the last 15 years, and many metropolitan-based refugees who struggle to find work or suitable accommodation in major cities like Melbourne or Sydney have independently followed the promise of a better life in a small rural town with more accessible employment and affordable housing.

The mentioned economically-driven policies and initiatives have been paralleled by local government efforts, that are primarily concerned with the social and cultural impacts of migration to regional towns and communities (Boese and Phillips, 2017). Over the past 10 years, many regional cities and towns in Australia have developed local initiatives to support the settlement of refugees in particular and, less so, of skilled migrants. Such local government initiatives range from Multi- and Intercultural policies and initiatives such as Intercultural Ambassador Programs[4] to involvement in larger scale initiatives such as the EU Council-initiative "Intercultural Cities"[5] or Australia's own incarnation of the "Welcoming cities"-initiative (Wickes et al., 2020). The aims of these initiatives include the social and cultural integration of "culturally and linguistically diverse" arrivals[6]; enhanced intercultural engagement between "existing" and "new" residents; addressing structural barriers and insufficient ethno-cultural resources for new arrivals (Jordan et al., 2007); and improving social cohesion in increasingly culturally diverse communities

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[3]This program is designed to allows temporary circular migration of nationals from nine Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste to work for employers in the agriculture and accommodation sectors.

[4]See f. ex. https://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/Services/Community-and-Care/Intercultural-Ambassador-Program

[5]See f. ex. https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/city/my-community/intercultural-city

[6]This phrasing and the acronym CALD are commonly used in Australian policy and practitioner discourse.

(Moran and Mallman, 2015). A rationale underpinning many of these initiatives is to increase the retention of migrants in the location (Krivokapic-Skoko and Collins, 2016), thus focusing on those migrants who have a legal pathway to a longer-term residency.

The growth of intercultural and multicultural policy investment in regional Australia has occurred largely in parallel to the earlier mentioned de facto labor migration programs such as the "backpacker"- visas[7] but also the dedicated seasonal worker program, which are shaped by the seasonal demands for agricultural labor. Notwithstanding the different aims underpinning regional refugee settlement (economic) and regional multi/interculturalism initiatives (cultural, social) on the one hand and visas for transient migrant labor (economic) on the other hand, these policies have jointly led to the co-existence of a wide range of residents with migrant backgrounds in regional locations and labor markets. While there are migrant and refugee groups whose retention in the regional location is an objective of local governments, there are also transient migrant workers whose readily available labor is critical to local businesses but whose existence is ignored in local multi- or interculturalism policies. Despite the absence of this latter group from most local governments' concerns with social cohesion and local multi- or interculturalism, transient migrant workers contribute significantly to local regional and rural development both through their labor and their consumption in regional towns. Their economic significance has been evident in the exceptions made for seasonal workers whose visas were extended in the context of Covid-19 (Sullivan, 2020), while PM Morrison told other temporary migrants to "go home" if they could no longer support themselves in the face of lost work due to business closures (Gibson and Moran, 2020).

Revisiting how the relationship between migration and development is conceived in the different policies described here, the economic rationale of Australia's overall migration policies (Wright, 2015) clearly shines through. The development objectives underpinning the skills and labour-focused regional migration policies at the federal level (i.e., the skilled temporary and regional skilled visas, the WHVs, and the Seasonal Worker program) are primarily economic via increasing a flexible labor supply and specialist skills basis in regional Australian towns. Regional employers and businesses and local economies clearly benefit from regional migration. This purely economic reading of migration benefits mirrors the conventional understanding of "development" in the (international) migration-development nexus, which is "firmly rooted in understandings of development as economic growth, which privileges the productive dimension of migrants' lives" (Bastia, 2018, 471). In the context of international development, the economic development is expected to accrue to migrants' countries of origin through investment of remittances. This economistic focus in development has received much criticism

with scholars pointing to the many social and cultural development outcomes migration can achieve as well as the call for a focus on migrants' development (Piper, 2009). In the mentioned regional multiculturalism and interculturalism-focused initiatives at the local and partly, the State-level the focus is, on the other hand, on the social and cultural outcomes of regional migration, with the beneficiaries being ideally both, the newly arriving migrants and the regional communities, in which they settle.

SCHOLARSHIP ON MIGRANTS' AND REFUGEES' REGIONAL MIGRATION EXPERIENCES IN AUSTRALIA AND INTERNATIONALLY

Australian scholarship on regional migration has grown since the early 2000s, alongside international research on rural migration in the global North. Starting with early analyses of the potential for and trend of regional migration (Withers and Powell, 2003; Hugo, 2014b), government-commissioned evaluations of specific regional refugee settlement pilots (Piper and Associates, 2007; Shepley, 2007; Piper and Associates, 2009) and studies of early refugee relocation initiatives (Taylor and Stanovic, 2005; ICEPA, 2007), the questions of attraction and retention, and "what works and doesn't work" in regional migration and particularly in refugee settlement has inspired much research.

Research on the experiences of migrants and former refugees in regional Australia and elsewhere has also been shaped by different disciplinary and epistemological priorities and foci. Much scholarship falls into one of two categories: studies that have focused on the employment experiences of migrant workers and, less so, of former refugees; and studies that are primarily interested in social and cultural dimensions and impacts of rural migration and settlement such as intercultural relations, social and cultural integration, belonging and in- or exclusion of migrant arrivals. Rural sociologists and human geographers have perhaps most successfully combined analysis of economic, social and cultural impacts of migration and mobility, identifying the emergence of an increasingly multicultural and multifunctional "global countryside" (Woods, 2007; Argent and Tonts, 2015). Each body of scholarship has contributed important insights that need to be brought to an analysis of the relationship between regional migration and refugee settlement and development.

Agricultural and horticultural jobs and employment in related food production sectors are the most-researched areas of regional and rural employment of migrants in Australia and internationally. Many researchers across the global North have highlighted the exploitative employment conditions migrant workers are habitually submitted to on farms, in orchards and in food processing, enabled by regulators' neglect in securing labor standards and a blind eye to unlawful employer practices in the context of a restructuring agricultural industry (Rye and Scott, 2018; Rosewarne, 2019). Wage theft, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, and physical (including sexual) abuse of

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[7]"Backpackers" is the common label for young people on Working Holiday- and Work and Holiday-visas in Australia.

migrant workers in workplaces that are generally "out of sight" and often neglected by law enforcement have been identified time and again, in studies in the United States (f. ex. Holmes, 2013), in countries across Europe (Rye and Scott, 2018), the United Kingdom (f. ex. Rogaly, 2008) and also in Australia (see f. ex. Underhill and Rimmer, 2016; Howe et al., 2020; Reilly et al., 2018). (Socio-) legal scholars and sociologists have drawn attention to the detrimental role of temporary migration regulations and citizenship status in producing or exacerbating precariousness in employment for many migrant workers (for Australia, see Howe et al., 2020; for Canada, see Preibisch, 2007; for Italy, see Urzi and Williams, 2017). Development scholars and political economists have furthermore queried the development impacts of guestworker schemes in the agricultural sector such as Bracero schemes in the United States and Canada (Basok, 2000; Preibisch, 2007) or the seasonal worker program in Australia (Rosewarne, 2019). In addition to this important research, relatively fewer studies have attended to the employment experiences of regional migrants in "skilled visa"-categories and of former refugees. An important finding here in Australian research has been the lack of employment pathways in regional locations, which has affected both groups (Johnston et al., 2009; Boese, 2013; Schech, 2014; Curry et al., 2018), whether based on racial discrimination or a scarcity of higher-skilled job openings.

The social and cultural impacts of regional migration, and the regional settlement experiences of migrants and former refugees have been another key focal point of research on rural migration over the last 2 decades. Research in Australia reflects trends in other locations. Overlapping interests have been in the transformations of rural places through migration, which have been captured through various sociological concepts including social integration, belonging (De Lima, 2012), and social cohesion (in Australia, Moran and Mallman, 2019), rural multiculturalism (Wilding and Nunn, 2018) and rural cosmopolitanism (Schech, 2014; Woods, 2018a) (for which Woods (2018b) has identified early beginnings in late 19th and early 20th century Australia). Scholars in Europe and Australia have highlighted the interconnectedness of rural places with others through the concept "translocalism" (De Lima, 2012) and "multi-local settlement" (Boese et al. 2020). Building on early research on rural racism (Chakraborti and Garland, 2004), researchers have explored the experiences of minority ethnic and racialized groups in rural locations through notions of visibility (Galligan et al., 2014), "intercultural encounters" and "everyday otherness" (Radford, 2016, Radford, 2017), and, importantly in Australia, the embedding of "local hierarchies of racialised and classed belonging and exclusion" in settler colonialism (Butler and Ben, 2020).

A growing body of research has highlighted limitations of current regional migration policies in Australia, pertaining to each of the mentioned groups as defined by visa status–refugees, skilled migrants, seasonal workers and backpackers. Two key insights that emerge repeatedly from these critical analyses are the challenge of limited employment opportunities for skilled migrants and refugees (for example; Johnston et al., 2009; Schech, 2014; Curry et al., 2018) and the persistent

exploitation of those who find work, in particular those on temporary visas and those working in the horticultural sector (for example Underhill and Rimmer, 2016; Reilly et al., 2018; Howe et al., 2020). Recent scholarship has also stressed the historical embedding of labor market-based inequalities and exploitation (Butler and Ben, 2020). These analyses highlight the need to unpack the nexus between migration and regional development further.

To do so, we suggest considering the question development scholar Raghuram (2009) has raised to remind international development practitioners and scholars of an understanding of migration "as personally developmental, rather than nationally developmental": "which migration? What development?" (Raghuram, 2009, 103). While Raghuram aimed to draw attention to the personal losses migrants might face who focus on development "there", referring to their home countries, we suggest considering the losses migrants might face in the course of regional development "here", in Australia.

RESEARCH AND METHODS

The data discussed in this paper stems from three interview and focus group-based research projects conducted over the last 10 years by one or both of the authors in rural and regional Victoria, in Australia's South East. These projects cover a diverse range of regional and rural locations in Victoria, in terms of their town size, migration patterns and history, and economic profile. Each project focused on regional migration, its impact on regional towns and on regional migrants themselves. We will foreground findings that raise fundamental issues and questions when researching the nexus between regional migration and development outcomes for migrants in a society of the global north that is built on migration and has seen the development of multicultural policies at all levels of government (Federal, State/Territory, Local). We will highlight evidence that directly addresses this paper's key research question "What kind of development can regional migration afford to migrants?" And, we will reflect on how regional migration policies impact migration experiences.

The first of these studies focused on regional settlement of recently arrived migrants and refugees to rural Victoria (referred to as Regional Settlement-project). It was one of the first research projects in Australia to investigate this phenomenon through a study of six regional and two metropolitan locations with data collected between 2010 and 2012. The project pursued a twofold focus on the intergovernmental coordination of regional migration and the settlement experiences of recently arrived visible migrants and refugees, including analysis of their employment pathways and identities. It was guided by the question: What are the social, economic and political factors that affect the resettlement experiences of recent visible migrants and refugees? The research comprised of an online survey of 106 settlement stakeholders, in-depth interviews with 85 recently arrived migrants and refugees, key informant interviews with 47 stakeholders and 14 focus groups with a total of 90 stakeholders involved in regional settlement, from government,

business and the community sector. This included members of local settlement planning committees such as multicultural liaison officers in local government, the health sector and the police; key employers and service providers. The data we draw on in this paper is from the interviews with migrants and the focus groups and interviews with key informants. The research locations were selected to reflect the diversity of settlement locations in terms of their size (large regional towns and small rural locations); immigration histories ("new" vs. "old" settlement locations); and the composition of recent arrivals in terms of migration streams (skilled, family, humanitarian); and regions of departure (Middle East; Asia and South-East Asia; Africa).

The second, unrelated project (referred to as Regional Multiculturalism-project, data collected in 2015) focused on multiculturalism and social cohesion in two rural communities (populations approximately 30,000 each) conducted in collaboration with a government agency. At the last census in 2016, each town had over 10% of its population born overseas. The towns' horticulture and agricultural industries have attracted waves of migration since the late nineteenth century and have recently relied heavily on temporary migrants for harvesting, picking and packing. Each location has also experienced relatively large influxes of humanitarian visa and asylum seeker migrants since the 1990s. The project examined factors enhancing and militating against social cohesion in multicultural contexts, guided by four main research questions: What are individuals, community-based organizations, local government, policy makers, and businesses doing well in terms of "getting along" in a multicultural/ethnically diverse environment? Where and what are the problems that affect social cohesion? Are there groups of people in particular difficulty? Are there current, emerging or foreseeable tensions between different people? And what might be done about them? This project involved 78 formal in-depth interviews, four focus groups, and also observation and informal conversations at community events such as festivals and film nights, and at community meetings. Researchers spoke to people from a range of health, welfare, government and non-government agencies, as well as community members from a range of immigrant, non-immigrant and Indigenous Australian backgrounds. Given the ethnic diversity and central importance of migration history in these locations, issues of migration loomed large in discussions about multiculturalism and social cohesion.

The third project (referred to as Regional Mobilities-Project) was developed on the basis of the authors' respective preceding research and was conducted jointly in 2016–2017, It focused on the intersection between social and spatial mobilities of migrant workers in rural Victoria, taking a town with a population of approximately 30,000 as case study. The research questions were: How do migrants' social and spatial mobilities in regional Australia relate to each other? How is social mobility shaped by spatial mobility, and vice versa? The study included 18 in-depth interviews with people from international migrant backgrounds, and 10 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders with knowledge of and experience with migrant settlement issues, all living in the main town and nearby small towns. The international migrant participants were skilled migrants,

humanitarian/refugee/asylum seeker entrants, and WHV-holders. Key stakeholders were from the community sector, local government, education sector and a large business. Interviews with international migrants focused on geographical moves and employment pathways within Australia, eliciting perceptions of motivation, interpretations of outcomes, and articulations of hopes and aspirations, for work, family, social mobility and possible future moves. Experiences of belonging and exclusion were also discussed. Key stakeholders were asked for their perspectives on migrants' geographical movements and experiences of employment, inclusion and exclusion, barriers and opportunities.

UNPACKING THE NEXUS BETWEEN REGIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Our research on regional migration experiences reveals the complex relationship between policies, social and economic hopes, needs and aspirations. Migrants on different visa categories and from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds move to regional locations with varying intentions and hopes, structured by and structuring experiences of time and place, of regional settlement and mobility, and indeed of "settlement mobilities" (Boese et al., 2020). In turn, the development outcomes of their migration can also be assessed along the axes of time and mobility. Within the wide range of regional migration and settlement experiences captured in our research, we can identify three sets of findings that illuminate the complexity of the regional migration-development nexus.

Employers' Role in the Regional Development-Migration Nexus

Our first set of findings addresses the significant and complex influence of employers on the development outcomes of regional migration, applying our focus on migrants' development. . Firstly, employers' demand for workers shapes migrant flows to regional locations and migrants' experiences in those locations in manifold ways. This is true for nearly every category of migrant, from skilled visa holders to backpackers and permanent residents from refugee backgrounds. For skilled workers, employer demand serves as the entry ticket to a regional skilled visa. Vacancies on farms and in regionally based cafes and restaurants meet a steady flow of WHV-and Work and Holiday visa holders (albeit disrupted by the arrival of covid-19). Seasonal workers from the Pacific Islands move to where employers participating in the Seasonal Labor Scheme need them. Finally, many former refugees move to regional Australia because of relocation initiatives including specific regional employers.

Secondly, employers directly shape migrants' experiences in regional locations beyond the point of attraction, thus having an impact on migrants' development outcomes. As sponsors of the majority of skilled-visa holders and also as employers of former refugees who relocate to regional towns, some employers take on important pastoral roles. The findings from the Regional

Settlement-project highlighted that migrants not entitled to settlement support often viewed their employer as the first port-of-call in any situations requiring local knowledge and advice. A group of former international students from India who had since been sponsored for a regional visa, characterized their employer affectionately as "google.com", signaling his role as go-to-person for any arising problems, from purchasing a car to finding suitable accommodation:

> Sameer: And every week, if we have some problem or we need something we go to Bruce . . .
>
> Amrit: If anything bad happened we call Bruce, anything could happen, we call him.
>
> Balraj: Car breaks down, he comes and picks it up.

Similarly, some of the former refugees who relocated from Melbourne to regional Victoria to take up employment in a meat processing plant identified their employer as their first point of contact when any problems arose. In one case this included helping out when a conflict with police arose due to a driving offense. In another case the employer's support consisted in speaking up publicly against the racial vilification one of his employees was subjected to outside of his workplace.

The critical role of employers in the settlement and welfare of migrant workers was also highlighted by other stakeholders in the often tightly-knit regional communities:

> The one thing I guess that stands out in the community for us, is that in a rural setting, a regional setting, the role of the employer is significant in the settlement of people of refugee backgrounds or migrants. Whereas in a big city like Melbourne . . . the role of the employer is different. There are so many other supports and other . . . opportunities and varied experiences, whereas in a place like (name of town) the role of the employer is significant.

Some employers themselves similarly characterized their relationship to migrant workers who they had attracted to the regional town in ways that indicated a paternal sense of responsibility for their settlement and a more personal relationship. One employer who also appreciated learning about different cultures illustrated this:

> I sort of felt that if I had kids that were travelling around the world, you would hope that there would be somebody who would take an interest, help them if they got into a little bit of trouble.... So I end up becoming their substitute parent. I mean, the Indians here, they call me uncle. So whenever there is a problem they ring me up "can you help move some furniture, what do we do with this . . . "

In the Regional Multiculturalism-project, a local employer, who had successfully expanded his family-owned business by embracing migrant workers in a context of labor shortage, also reflected on a sense of obligation to do something to help integrate the new migrants who had moved into his area:

> I ended up with African neighbors over the road. My kids went to school with African kids. It was a big and sudden change in the community that opened my eyes, and at the same time I was going to work faced with 10 applicants none of which were suitable or ready for work. So we literally went through a process of sitting down with our whole staff in a staff meeting and saying, "We're going to do something different where we've got these new people in our community and we want to give them a chance. We want you to embrace them. We want you to make the effort to extend and help these people settle in our workplace."

This employer was well known in the area for employing a high number of migrant and refugee employees, on decent wages and conditions, and with strong anti-discrimination and anti-racism work practices.

It was clear from the accounts of several migrants, some employers themselves, and other key stakeholders, that the very act of having "brought" migrants to the location often came with a sense of responsibility. In particular in smaller towns with predominantly white Anglo-Australian local populations for whom the sudden influx of visibly different migrants was a first time experience, local governments and some local service providers were left with a sense of being overwhelmed and unprepared. In one of these locations the employer was a regular participant in the local settlement planning committee because of his intermediary role in relation to recent arrivals; in other locations, employers became vocal advocates for attracting migrants and refugees to the location, based on their experience with an increasingly culturally diverse workforce.

Employer practices varied a lot, however, and some employers' sense of responsibility should not be confused with, and does not replace, accountability. On the contrary, the lack of accountability emerged in examples where migrants described being underpaid or discriminated against, which most tolerated without complaining (as is often observed in studies of precarious migrant labor (see f. ex. Rogaly, 2008). The combination of quasi-settlement support and exploitation in the same employer both challenges a neat qualification of employment as rural settlement "success" (Curry et al., 2018), and raises questions about the relationship between exploitation in employment and rural conviviality (Neal and Walters, 2008). The constellation of employers who step in as quasi-settlement support workers while benefitting from workers' compliance, also differ from the kinds of bonds between employers and migrant workers described elsewhere (Rye and Scott, 2018). They demonstrate one of several side-effects of an employer-oriented migration policy that prioritizes local economic interests (or capital) over migrants' welfare. The fact that employers play such an important integrative role also reveals, as argued earlier, how categories of migrants are constructed through government policy regimes as labor resources, for regional areas, whose own professional development needs are secondary to the imperative of economic development.

Thirdly, when considering employers' shaping of the regional migration-development nexus, not only do they directly affect

migrants' socio-economic situation through levels of pay, units of labor (piece or hourly rates) and hours, they also shape workers' employment satisfaction, their work-based identities and future employment pathways. How much significance migrants themselves attach to the latter depends on several factors, of which two stand out as particularly relevant for the broader question of development. One is the meaning of a specific job in relation to migrants' employment trajectories and overall life courses; the other is the overall purpose of their migration to Australia. The next section will explore how these two interrelate.

Regional Migration in the Context of Migrants' Life Courses

To assess the development outcomes of regional migration with a focus on migrants themselves requires a consideration of how migratory movements are embedded in migrants' life courses. Migrants move to regional Australian towns for different reasons and with varying expectations, needs and aspirations. WHV-holders, for example, primarily seek to find short-term work on farms that is relatively easy to access, not requiring prior experience nor an arduous application process, and is often combined with the provision of accommodation. As explained earlier, a second-year on the WHV can be accessed by working in a designated regional location for 88 days. Backpackers' stays in regional Australia are thus relatively short-lived, even if it commonly takes many more than 88 days of residing in regional locations to accumulate 88 days of work, due to weather conditions and the insecurity of shifts. The experiences of backpackers in regional Australia tend to involve continued mobility in search of the next job, expectations tend to be focused on work, as this quote from an interview with a British backpacker, from Regional Mobilities-project, illustrates.

> I'm aiming to get to Byron for June and July. Because that's when the blueberries start again. I think in blueberries you can make the most money picking fruit, cause it's so small, it doesn't weigh a lot, if you do it quite fast. But I've got till June, July, so hopefully I'll find a farm where I can do it, just so I can tick it off my visa.

Even if pay rates are poor, and backpackers are often subject to unlawful labor conditions including wage theft and even physical and sexual abuse as has been widely reported in the media and scholarship (see f. ex. SBS, 2015; Farbenblum and Berg, 2017; Mullins, 2019) many backpackers stay on to accumulate their 88 work days to secure the entitlement for a second year visa. Here we see a direct relationship between policy regime (requirements to attain extension of visa), regulatory neglect (lack of government action to improve labor conditions for backpackers) and outcomes for this migrant category. Overall, the working holiday-period constitutes an extra-ordinary experience in the lives of many backpackers, *not* related to their lives in their home countries, neither in terms of building on their previous experience or qualifications, nor in terms of working toward their employment future. The regionally based manual laboring job is for many a mere "stint" in their lives,

that some interpret and validate retrospectively as resilience-building experience, and at best a quick source of income. One British backpacker in the Regional Mobilities-project explained his reasoning for the initial move to Australia as follows:

> I think I was quite fed-up at home. I felt like I was stuck in a rut. Also seemed to kept being dragged into other people's dramas. I suppose I just wanted to get away from (it all) to be honest with you, and just have a break. At the same time, you just want to go to Australia. (laughs)

Backpackers commonly travel with others and find out about the next farm job from co-workers, co-travelers or via social media. They often stay in "backpacker hostels" that are let to them by labor contractors or on the farm, and barely engage with local communities. Their contribution to Australia's horticultural production and to local labor supply is significant, while their social and cultural impact beyond the economic dimensions of regional development is minimal. This reflects research findings on rural migrant workers in food production in other countries (Riley et al., 2018). Mostly out of sight of the local community, backpackers are perceived as an anonymous yet considerably sized transient population that is inconsequential for most locals, although some stakeholders cautiously indicated that the flux of backpackers is not always embraced by the local population. As one stakeholder in the Regional Multiculturalism-project commented, "They're a little bit of a disruptive influence." It is crucial to note here however, that the availability of a perpetual flow of mobile labor through backpackers (at least until the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic), means that in some regional locations refugee settlers who seek local work compete with this more mobile labor supply. So the regulatory production–via the WHV–of flexible, willing and readily available flows of workers who are extremely unlikely to seek enforcement of their labor rights, harms the regionally resettled refugees who try to access low-threshold jobs on farms, and benefits the farmers or contractors who can employ at the cheapest possible rate.

Many regional residents with migration or refugee backgrounds move to regional Australia with the aim of establishing a new home. This kind of migration for settlement is usually connected to the hope for, or the specific prospect of, paid work but the migration decision is often also infused with expectations of a particular lifestyle, a desire for a sense of belonging and overall the hope for a better life. Across all three research projects we met people from refugee backgrounds who moved to a regional area to satisfy their desire for a safe space for their young children to grow up in, away from the risky influences they associated with major cities, as this typical statement from a former asylum seeker in the Regional Mobilities-project indicates:

> If the children from age 16 to 21, they are free to go outside day and night to contact with bad people, for example, who are drunk or addicts or trouble maker,

certainly they will get in trouble for that finally. The environment is very important for the family (in this town), for the children.

Another important dimension of migration that relates to hopes, needs and aspirations is the variety of experiences within one household. All of our research projects included spouses who compromised their career through the move to a small regional town. Highly skilled and qualified but without an employer sponsor, many partners of temporary skilled visa holders cannot find suitable employment and prioritize their partner's employment and their children's wellbeing over their own career. This example not only indicates the more limited labor market opportunities in small regional towns, but it also highlights the importance of studying migration policy outcomes beyond the level of the primary visa holder, and of considering the significance of family and household needs in shaping retention. There are costs attached to these compromises, which rarely show up in the "win-win" accounts of regional migration. This is evident in accounts like the following from a highly educated spouse of a skilled visa-holder from India who participated in the Regional Settlement-project:

> The fact is when I was walking from my home to (the supermarket) for my very first day, the very first day when I had to start my job, I was crying . . . I had tears in my eyes, and I was thinking my qualifications . . . I've completed my double masters from India, I've done double bachelors and double masters, and I was doing another masters, I'm still doing it, from University of Southern Queensland, and that's Masters in Education, and on top of that I have nine years of teaching experience and all in good schools which were reputed to international standards. And I was thinking that I worked so hard all my life, and I worked in the top-most industries and in the top-most school, never ever thinking that one day I'll stand here serving people at . . . the front desk.

Beyond the despair and emotional burden of underemployment, the considerations of another highly qualified participant, a young woman from South East Asia and participant in the Regional Mobilities-project, demonstrate the importance of medium-term aspirations beyond life in the regional town alongside the short-term prioritization of the children's needs for stability.

> I mean, we didn't want to uproot, move kids again, we've made that big move from overseas to here, that's a bit too much. That also is the reason why we thought maybe we'd settle in (this town) in the meantime, because we don't want to uproot her again. To be honest, we're thinking three years' time she'll be going to Uni, and then maybe we can make another decision. So we could maybe move.

Others again move for the job their visa is tied to, and they expect to move again, maybe three years later, when their legal status provides them this freedom. Or they have a clear earning objective in mind, and they will move on again once they have saved sufficient money to achieve their real objective, as illustrated in the following account of a recently arrived refugee (in the Regional Settlement-project) who has picked up work in a meat processing plant to earn money for his visit home:

> To me it is a temporary work. Because I have a reason why I have come here. The reason is simple as I just want to pay for my ticket and leave. The temporary work for is actually, because I still have the dream of going back to university and finishing my degree.

Across the different groups it is clear that regional migration and its meaning in people's lives vary considerably depending on the temporal embedding of regional migration in people's life course and the hopes invested in this migration. How paid work features in the overall experience of migration is a lot more variable than a purely economic interpretation of the migration-development nexus would suggest.

Long-Term Pathways for Sustainable Development Versus Short-Term Fixes

A third set of findings relates to the tension between short term fixes–primarily of labor or skills gaps–and long term planning for sustainable settlement including pathways for regional migrants. Short-term regional migration planning that starts and ends with matching willing workers with vacant jobs often comes along with underemployment, if not for the primary visa holder, then for their partner. Underemployment is a well-researched and widely known aspect of recently arrived migrants' and refugees' employment trajectories (Ho and Alcorso, 2004; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2006). Taxi-driving engineers have become a cliché illustration of the wide-spread occupational down-grading or "skidding" (Hugo, 2014a) and status loss experienced by many tertiary-educated new arrivals, in particular from refugee backgrounds, in Australia (Constable et al., 2004). In addition to the mental health impacts such downgrading can have (Das-Munshi et al., 2012), the issue of blocked employment pathways also obstructs sustainable regional development. Alongside the already mentioned temporary compromises or trade-offs migrants might engage in at the level of employment, migrants also vote with their feet and leave regional locations that do not offer career pathways.

Service providers who are at the coalface of assisting migrant jobseekers to enter the labor market are often well aware of both the obstacles many of them face and their aspirations and dreams. Many employment service providers today embrace the workfare mantra that "any job is better than no job" or even advise their clients to take on voluntary work in order to improve their opportunities for paid work in the long run. The Australian Government's Cultural Orientation Program (AUSCO) advises refugees even before they arrive in Australia that "learning English and accepting the first job you are offered are the first steps (in) settling into your new home" (DSS, 2018: 1). Several of

our research participants across the three projects have heeded the advice to volunteer or decided themselves to choose that path when failing to find a paid job.

Pascal, a former refugee from Togo and participant in the Regional Settlement-project, explained that a settlement service provider sometimes drew without paying on his interpreting support when they conducted research. Susan, a former refugee from Ethiopia who participated in the Regional Settlement-project, volunteered in a childcare center. Lilly, a skilled migrant from South East Asia and participant in the Regional Mobilities-project, quoted below, started volunteering in a local community organization, "to get to know people":

> We felt that for us to fast track integrating into the community, we need to really get out there. I mean we knew of (our own) community around the area, but we felt like if we just stuck to them, I mean, we can't move on. We need to know the culture, we need to know the language, we need to know the people and understand how the community operates.

The leader of a local Congolese association, from a refugee background and participant in the Regional Multiculturalism-project, who had worked in high status professional jobs in Africa, spoke of his typical combination of volunteering and part-time work: "(W)ith all my work I'm doing here, . . . I never work as a full time...I always work as volunteer, I work I guess part time so, but I'm casual." He reflected that this was a common experience among his migrant and refugee peers.

Several women we interviewed for our research on the relationship between social and spatial mobilities explained that their volunteering work contributed to their sense of belonging and connectedness, and in some cases even to paid work. It is clear from the way in which volunteering is represented by service providers but also by many volunteers themselves, that many perceive it instrumentally as a vehicle of development at the level of the individual migrant. This includes the development of social networks, familiarity with local people and workplace culture and a sense of belonging. While lacking financial returns or indeed a guaranteed pathway to paid work, the sense of contributing and gaining connection makes volunteering worthwhile for many regional residents with migration or refugee backgrounds, especially when they have a partner in paid work.

Others can however not afford unpaid work and have to take on any paid job they can access. In regional locations, these typically encompass a range of hard, manual labor, from farms to packing sheds or at the local meat plant, the kind of employment known as precarious, low-paid, insecure and often unhealthy. Depending on migrants' aspirations and their migration or relocation intentions, such jobs may be calculated to achieve a necessary income or interpreted as a temporary solution until a better job comes up. At the same time, shift work often interferes with other professional development activities, such as the participation in an English language course, thus obstructing the pathway to a better job, as is illustrated by Wei from China (participant in the Regional Settlement-project), a skilled migrant

who works at the meatworks: "the problem for most new migrants, as well as my personal circumstances, is I would like to improve my English, however in the mean time I have to work so there's a conflict."

The dead-end nature of many jobs in regional Australia, that are increasingly filled by migrants or former refugees, is no secret to regional stakeholders who see people leave because of the lack of employment pathways. Already in 2011, a peak service provider in regional Australia who took part in a focus group with other key stakeholders in the Regional Settlement-project, drew attention to the potential detrimental effect of lacking pathway planning:

> And it's a pathways question too cause . . . the sad reality is that a lot of people will have to start their life in Australia in a meat factory . . . or driving cabs but, but that if, if, we are to avoid the situation where you do get an underclass in rural Victoria I think we really need to think about the pathways out of those places and I, and I think to its credit although it may not be the case at the moment I think (an earlier relocation initiative) may not have succeeded but at least it had the aspiration to, to create those pathways when it, when it first started.

The notion of a rural social underclass has also been raised in studies of migrant workers in rural food production in other countries (Rye, 2014), highlighting likely limitations of rural migration outcomes.

The Congolese association leader (interviewed for the Regional Multiculturalism-project), quoted previously, also explicitly emphasized the way that the local Anglo-dominated community where he lived, and its local council, were prepared to celebrate cultural diversity, but that employment-related questions were thoroughly neglected:

> And in that context, you can see that the social inclusion in (this town is) becoming hard. (This town) only does good . . . when there is a function, when you invite people there is a party you know? So you can see people came from, because where everyone had come and they want to demonstrate this (culture) and dance and everything, but when it came to employment, that is where it becomes issues.

This town is frequently cited in the media as a successful multicultural place, but when asked about this, he viewed the town as unsuccessful, because it did not provide economic opportunities for people from many migrant and refugee backgrounds. While local council had a cultural diversity strategic plan, it had no strategic plan for employment. In addition, there was no local interest in drawing on the experiences and knowledge of refugees:

> So the question is you have, or we use, because this is the idea of settlement, if you look at how's the settlement started, it was to bring people so we can share knowledge. So why this has been stopping for the

recently immigrant? We don't see if there's much effort that's put in place to help immigrant to use all kind of knowledge they brought from overseas, here. They want to contribute in this region as well.

Another Congolese former refugee from the same town (participant in the Regional Multiculturalism-project), who had extensive IT experience in Africa, could only ever get short term work, and did a lot of volunteer work at schools, even though he had added an Australian Masters in IT to his previous skills. He spoke of his continual struggle to find paid work, despite his high level of professional skills; he felt that employers would use the three or six month probation period to enact a hidden form of discrimination–though he had good reports on his work, he had had more than one experience of his contract not being renewed after the probation period had finished: "I believe that when they don't take you for the full time or they don't give you another contract and they don't tell you which kind of mistake you did so that they cannot keep you, there is hidden discrimination". Though his wife and children were settled in the town, and his wife preferred to stay there, he was thinking about moving to a bigger city for opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Australian governments since the 1990s have made concerted efforts to attract and retain a range of migrants and refugees in regional Australia, aimed at economic development and sustainable populations for rural communities, while at the same time taking pressure off larger cities and their infrastructures and services. They have introduced a range of visas among other policy initiatives to encourage regional migration including of highly qualified "skilled migrants," "flexible, mobile labor" for regionally based unskilled jobs and resettled refugees. Our analysis has demonstrated that the majority of these policies treats regional migrants as agents of local economic development via their participation in regional labor markets, which is reflected in the persistent, wide-spread exploitation of transient horticultural workers, the insufficient consideration of settlement support needs for non-transient workers; and the lack of concern with employment opportunities for refugees and partners of skilled migrants. While these different groups have received separate attention in studies of rural migration, their experiences have rarely been analyzed together, and with a focus on their own development. Thus, studies of exploitation of migrant and refugee workers in regional industry sectors (as discussed in many destination countries in the global North, see Rogaly, 2008; Underhill and Rimmer, 2016; Rye and Scott, 2018) implicitly challenge the notion that regional migration benefits migrants, but such findings are rarely used to challenge the positive development-outcomes of regional migration, promoted by policy makers, researchers and settlement service providers alike (AMES Australia and Deloitte Access Economics, 2015; Collins et al., 2016; Tudge 2019). Blocked employment mobilities whether for skilled migrants (Schech, 2014) or for refugees (Curry et al., 2018)

have slowly become recognized as skills wastage and wastage of human capital (Constable et al., 2004), but the reference point for these losses is often local economies rather than people with migrant or refugee backgrounds themselves. We argue for a shift in measuring the development outcomes of regional migration to centering migrants' development as a benchmark for successful regional migration policies.

Our analysis of interviews and focus groups conducted over the course of ten years has identified three important dimensions of regional migration that illuminate the limitations to viewing regional migration as a source of development: the complex role of employers; the embedding of migration events in migrants' life courses; and the tension between short fixes and long-term pathways. The influence of employers beyond the initial attraction and employment of migrants is significant for understanding their stake in regional migration and retention and, consequently, in the regional migration-development-nexus. Despite employers' role in attracting and often retaining workers, and their variable role in settlement support, employers are hardly guarantors of migrants' and refugees' development in regional locations. Some employers have stepped in to fill the vacuum created by governments, characterized by lack of planning and the inadequacy or absence of local, targeted support services, that also contributes to the absence of viable employment pathways for economically, socially, culturally and racially vulnerable migrants and refugees. This situation in combination with the extensive exploitation of the labor of migrants and refugees, especially in horticultural work and food processing, also threatens regional development. Not only does the underemployment of many migrants and refugees experienced in regional Australia translate to a loss of skills from the perspective of local economies but the lack of avenues for skills development and the absence of viable career pathways, ultimately affect the retention of migrants.

The policy failure of, on the one hand, viewing skilled migrants as simply "needed" for their skills while neglecting to support their and their partners' integration and socio-cultural inclusion, and on the other of viewing refugees as those who will and should accept the first job on offer (DSS, 2018), and as primarily requiring a policy response of cultural "integration" because they are seen as "cultural Others", also has negative implications for regional development. It has effects on the development of migrants and refugees themselves (Piper, 2009), resulting in thwarted ambitions and hopes for many partners of skilled migrants and blocked pathways for many refugees, exacerbated by the poor employment conditions that characterize work in typical regionally based employment sectors such as horticulture and meat processing. The implications of WHV failures in combination with poor labor law protection in the horticultural sector have been highlighted elsewhere and combined with calls for visa reform and better rights protection (see f. ex. Farbenblum and Berg, 2017; Reilly et al., 2018, Campbell 2019), but the effects of these policies for other locally settling migrants and former refugees need to be much better understood. The discussed findings from three studies of regional migration conducted over the last 10 years, indicate that the question, what development regional migration affords to

migrants themselves, deserves more attention in future regional migration policy design.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All relevant data is contained within the article: Selected original contributions are included in the article. Raw data cannot be made available in its entirety based on the limitations of the university's research ethics approval and participants' consent. Further inquiries should be directed to MB, m.boese@ latrobe.edu.au. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to MB, m.boese@latrobe.edu.au.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics

Committee and La Trobe University Human Research Ethics Committee. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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"He Never Wants to Leave. I Would Leave in a Second." Examining Perceptions of Rural Life and its Impact on Families who Migrate for Employment and Those who Stay Behind in Atlantic Canadian Communities

Christina Murray[1]*, Hannah S. Skelding[2] and Doug Lionais[3]

[1]Faculty of Nursing, University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, PEI, Canada, [2]Master of Global Affairs, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Mostoles, Spain, [3]Shannon School of Business, Cape Breton University, Sydney, NS, Canada

In Canada, interprovincial labor migration is a common form of mobile work that is significant for rural communities especially in Atlantic Canada. Unique to this form of labor migration is the gendered nature of the phenomenon resulting in men often leaving their wives, families and rural communities behind for employment opportunities in the oil and gas sectors thousands of kilometers away. As men leave their families and communities for employment, women who are left behind become primary caregivers to children in addition to also being the primary caretakers of the family home. The Tale of Two Islands project was a multi-year, cross regional mixed methods research study that examined labor mobility and its impact on families and communities. This paper examines how labor migration has impacted families and rural communities. Drawing upon focus group, conversational and key informant interviews with families impacted by mobile labor and practitioners who serve them, societal perceptions of gendered norms and perceptions of rural life became illuminated. This has contributed to multiple contradictions and role confusion as families adapt and adjust to periods of reunification and separation while striving to remain connected to their rural communities. Men yearn for opportunities to be an active member of their home communities but cannot a result of living away for extended periods of time. In contrast, women who stay behind in rural communities often chose to isolate from community activities as a result of perceived judgments that are attributed to traditional views of rural life and family roles.

Keywords: family, mobile work, rural community, gender, Atlantic Canada

INTRODUCTION

Canada consists of many communities experiencing the phenomenon of men leaving their families behind in pursuit of employment opportunities within the country. This unique form of migration is often referred to as interprovincial labor migration (Morse and Mudgett, 2018). Many of the people that engage in interprovincial labor migration from Atlantic Canada are men with wives and families who travel for employment while maintaining homes and supporting families left behind. For men who fly long distances for employment, work patterns may be predictable with predetermined schedules known or they may be highly unpredictable and return to home dates uncertain. Whether known or unknown, repetitive patterns of separation and reunification, contribute to family disruption and disorganization (Parreñas, 2000; Grzywacz et al., 2006; Taylor and Graetz Simmonds, 2009; Torkington et al., 2011; Wray, 2012; Meredith et al., 2014; Murray, 2014; Vodden and Hall, 2016; Donatelli et al., 2017; Murray, 2017; Scannell and Gifford, 2017; LeDrew et al., 2018; Neil and Neis, 2020). When men in families leave their homes and communities behind for employment opportunities, it is often their wives who remain behind and take on the primary responsibilities of the house and family that would normally be shared with their partner. The long physical distances associated with migrant work impact the worker's relationships with their spouse, children, and extended family. Along with a change in family dynamics comes a shift in the fabric of the community. Men who work away from their "home communities" are not present for extended periods of time to experience the day-to-day functioning of their family within the context of rural community life. There can be vast differences in the perceptions of community and rural life between men who are working away and women who remain behind in the community. Therefore, it is critical to examine the familial perceptions of interprovincial labor migration and rural community life through a gendered lens.

In Canada, the phenomenon of interprovincial labor migration has been most apparent in the four provinces of Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. As a result of Canada's Freedom of Mobility Act statistics regarding the total number of people leaving Atlantic Canada for interprovincial labor migration are not known (Murray, 2014). However, within the communities in Atlantic Canada it is well known that many men are engaging in this form of mobile work as a result of the economic instability in the region (Lionais et al., 2020). Specifically, within the Atlantic region, P.E.I. and Cape Breton Island are two areas that have been significantly impacted by interprovincial labor migration. Both P.E.I. and Cape Breton have a significant number of men engaging in this form of migrant work. P.E.I. is the smallest province in Canada, both geographically and by population. There are approximately 157,000 people currently living on P.E.I. (P.E.I. Statistics Bureau, 2019), with an estimated 51,000 people living in two identified cities, Charlottetown and Summerside (Prince Edward Island Department of Finance, 2019). This is significant when compared to the Canadian population as a whole, whereby 71.5% of the current

population lives in an urban metropolitan area (Statistics Canada, 2019). Nova Scotia shares similar characteristics to P.E.I. Between 2015 and 2016, the total estimated population of Nova Scotia had a 0.6 percent increase (Nova Scotia Finance and Treasury Board, 2017). However, during that time only the urban Halifax County and three other counties (Annapolis, Kings, and Antigonish) increased in population (Nova Scotia Finance and Treasury Board, 2017). Notably, Cape Breton County experienced the largest population decline between 2015 and 2016 (Nova Scotia Finance and Treasury Board, 2017). This population decline in Cape Breton has a long history. Between 1991 and 2006, 37.7% of the population aged between 20 and 34 left the area (Wray, 2012). While Cape Breton makes up approximately 15 percent of Nova Scotia's population, from 2006 to 2011, 41 to 45 percent of all workers engaging in interprovincial labor migration from Nova Scotia to Alberta were from Cape Breton and in 2011, employees from Cape Breton Island represented 5.5 percent of Alberta's employed labor force (Lionais et al., 2020). This finding shows the significant impact interprovincial labor mobility is having on rural populations and migrant labor flows from rural Atlantic Canada.

The primary economic drivers in P.E.I. and Cape Breton rural communities are seasonally based industries, such as fishing, farming and tourism (Lionais et al., 2020). Seasonally dependent industries offer limited employment and economic opportunities. Individuals who are employed in seasonal sectors often have higher rates of unemployment, decreased individual and family incomes, lower levels of educational attainment, and increased rates of out-migration (Wray, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2015; Hardy et al., 2018; Prince Edward Island Department of Finance, 2019). As of January 2020, the overall unemployment rate in Canada was 5.5 percent (Statistics Canada, 2020). However, in P.E.I. and Cape Breton the unemployment rates were 8.8 percent and 12.2 percent respectively (Statistics Canada, 2020). The consequences of seasonal employment and subsequent unemployment lead to people relying on Federal Government employment insurance benefits as a source of income supplementation. Federal benefits are frequently less than half of one's income earned when employed and contribute to precarious financial situations for individuals and their families. It is clear that family finances act as a catalyst behind a person's decision to leave their family and rural community in search of better employment and economic opportunities.

There is a reciprocal interconnectivity with mobile families impacting rural communities and simultaneously rural communities impacting mobile families. Not only has the oil and gas sector in Alberta impacted P.E.I. and Cape Breton from a social perspective, it has also shaped these communities economically. In 2011 the income earned in Atlantic Canada by interprovincial employees added 2.3 billion dollars to the Atlantic Canadian economy (Lionais et al., 2020). From this total income, interprovincial employees working in Alberta contributed one billion dollars (Lionais et al., 2020). Forty-five percent of interprovincial employment income in P.E.I. was from Alberta (Lionais et al., 2020). In Cape Breton, 64.8 percent of the income generated interprovincial employees annually came from

Alberta (Lionais et al., 2020). This economic inflow into P.E.I. and Cape Breton reveals the significance of interprovincial employment for rural communities in these provinces. It also illustrates how dependent rural communities have become on remittances earned from interprovincial employment as a key economic source to support rural community sustainability in Atlantic Canada. With such a small population base and high reliance on oil and gas remittances as economic generators have recently been quantified however, the personal and family impacts of interprovincial labor migration remain often overlooked.

Mobile work opportunities, such as long-distance commuting in the mining and oil and gas sectors, create a distance between workers and the rural community (Meredith et al., 2014; Vodden and Hall, 2016; Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018; Morse and Mudgett, 2018). Life in rural areas is complicated through the considerations of movement, mobility and place attachment between workers and their rural communities (Scannell and Gifford, 2017; Morse and Mudgett, 2018). Within Atlantic Canada, Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.) and Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, are islands comprised of small, rural, and often isolated communities. These communities are defined by close-knit relationships and may be representative of multi-generational families who have deep roots in the community often spanning back to Canadian confederation. Being rooted in one's community contributes to a sense of community ownership and wellbeing. This holds especially true for mobile families living in P.E.I. and Cape Breton who identify their rural Island communities to be their "home community" even though their physical presence in these communities is limited due to their out of province employment. This sentiment is associated with a belief that living in a small community contributes to a sense of well-being and is positively associated with quality of life for both individuals and families (Scannell and Gifford, 2017). As mobile workers continue to work away from home their attachment to their community is continually disrupted.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Labor migration is a global phenomenon. The United Nations International Office of Migration recently reported that in 2020 there were 164 million migrant workers. These workers provided 689 billion US dollars in remittances (McAuliffe et al., 2019). From review of literature, it has become evident that there is a lack of consistency in terminology to describe the type of employment where mobile workers are employed within their country of residency but working in locations thousands of kilometers away from their families and home communities. The following terms have been identified and used interchangeably in literature to describe this form or labor mobility: fly-in-fly-out, drive-in-drive-out, long distance commuting, commute work, long distance labour commuting, extended commuting, circular migration, circular mobility, commuting work, long-distance commute work, job-related spatial mobility, pendulum migration, seasonal migration, oscillating migration, geographic mobility. Additional terms

such as temporary foreign workers, guestworkers, and non-resident employment have also been used to describe employment patterns when employees travel out of country for employment. This lack of consistency in terminology contributes to a global lack of understanding, programs, policies and practices that specifically address this unique form of employment mobility.

Additionally, there is a sparsity of research conducted specifically on how travelling long distances for employment impacts families and home communities. Delving further into literature examples from Australia, the Philippines, and Mexico were discovered. In these countries employment occurred internally or internationally resulting in prolonged periods of family separation (Parreñas, 2000; Grzywacz et al., 2006; Taylor and Graetz Simmonds, 2009; Torkington et al., 2011; Meredith et al., 2014; McAuliffe et al., 2019). Australian researchers reported that among fly-in and fly-out workers there are higher rates of marital stress, divorce and extramarital affairs (Torkington et al., 2011). Additional studies revealed that fly-in and fly-out employment, was disruptive and affected the psychological wellbeing of families (Grzywacz et al., 2006; Torkington et al., 2011; Meredith et al., 2014). In the Philippines, the majority of migrant work is completed by women who are often employed for defined periods of time as caregivers in other countries. Women often leave their children and partners behind for these employment opportunities (Parreñas, 2000; Parreñas, 2001). In the Philippines, to leave one's country for temporary work in another, is lucrative and highly favored as a middle-class professional stream due to the significant remittances that are returned to their families (Parreñas, 2000). However, women who engage in mobile work can encounter discrimination which negatively impacts their psychological well-being (Hall et al., 2019). In the United States, approximately 75 percent of migrant farmworkers come from Mexico (Mccoy et al., 2016). Researchers have discovered that depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and high-risk sexual activity are experienced more frequently among these farmworkers (Torkington et al., 2011; Mccoy et al., 2016; McAuliffe et al., 2019).

Upon further examination of literature, it was noted that the experiences of families impacted by mobile labor are deeply rooted in gender. Globally trends in migrant labor also reveal the gendered nature of this phenomenon with 96 million men compared to 68 million women employed as migrant laborers in 2017 (McAuliffe et al., 2019). In the Philippines women working abroad continue to be the primary caregiver and authority who is making decisions for their children while they are working away (Parreñas, 2000; Parreñas, 2001). They also provide emotional support for their husband (Parreñas, 2000; Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018). When men are the migrant workers the roles associated with gender do not change, women still hold onto a larger share of household and familial responsibility (Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018). Similar to Australia, interprovincial labor migration in the Canadian context is dominated by men, with at least half of those working in the oil and gas sector being men (Wray, 2012; Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018; Neil and Neis, 2020).

Unlike, guest workers, or temporary foreign workers, Canadians commuting long distances for work are citizens and can travel without documentation or restrictions throughout the country. They can retain residence in one province yet travel frequently to locations thousands of kilometers away for employment. Skeldon (Skeldon, 2012) identifies internal labor migration to be the most ideal form of labor migration because internal migrants, in most countries, are free to come and go as they please, unrestricted by the laws and employment policies associated with entering and working in a foreign country (Skeldon, 2012).

Due to the large geographical size of Canada, Atlantic Canadians workers must fly in and fly out for employment in the oil and gas sectors of Western Canada. Unlike Australia very little is known about the experiences of Canadian workers and their families who are impacted by interprovincial labor mobility. While Australia has formalized services, supports and policies specific to the needs of fly-in fly-out families (Meredith et al., 2014), Canadian policies and supports specific to the needs of families impacted by labor mobility are lacking. It has only been within the past 10–15 years that programs of research specific to interprovincial labor migration and the experiences of families has emerged (Wray 2012; Murray, 2014; Donatelli et al., 2017; Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018; LeDrew et al., 2018; Neil and Neis, 2020). The lead author of this paper was one of the first Canadian researchers to begin a program of research exploring family experiences of labor migration and its impact on rural communities in Atlantic Canada. Beginning with her doctoral study focusing on the experiences of women left behind, to the intergenerational family experiences of labor migration, to the first ever Canadian symposium on families, work and mobility, her program of research has helped to advance understanding of this issue in Canada.

Atlantic Canada has the highest proportion of people living in rural communities and is characterized by having older populations higher rates of seasonally dependent employment, unemployment, and poverty (Stattistics Canada, 2015; Hardy et al., 2018; Statistics Canada 2018). Rural community and identity are important factors to consider when examining the impact of migration and the push-pull factors that contribute to men deciding to leave their families behind for employment. Motives for out-migration from rural spaces are drastically different from the motivations for leaving an urban area. Factors such as employment, education, sense of belonging, and family support have a large role in the decision-making process of individuals who choose to leave their rural community (Morse and Mudgett, 2018; Neil and Neis, 2020). There is a dominant cultural construction of rurality that is strongly connected to stability, rootedness, and attachment to place (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014; Morse and Mudgett, 2018). This notion of rurality implies that rural spaces are not as prone to mobility as urban spaces. In comparison to urban spaces, it is a common narrative to assume that rural spaces are less mobile than urban (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014). People choose to live in rural areas for many reasons (Morse and Mudgett, 2018). At the forefront of these decisions is a strong connection to place and family (Morse and Mudgett, 2018). For many people, staying in a rural place is an active decision (Morse and Mudgett, 2018). While there is a perceived nature of stability associated with rural communities, these spaces also experience a complex range of mobilities (Milbourne and Kitchen, 2014).

In Canada, interprovincial labor migration impacts not only the worker, but also their family who remains behind in the rural community (Wray, 2012; Markey et al., 2015; Vodden and Hall, 2016). The nature of interprovincial labor migration in Canada mimics the societal standards that are commonplace in Canada, especially in rural areas (Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018). Regardless, of employment location and actual amount of time spent with their families, men consider their rural communities to be their home communities. They have a strong sense of place attachment. In their absence, wives adopt additional roles and responsibilities as they become the primary caregiver to children, and caretaker of homes, in their partners absence (Murray, 2014; Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018; LeDrew et al., 2018). These experiences can shape perceptions of rural community life differently depending on whether one is leaving for employment or staying behind. To understand this more fully, it is critical to examine both of these perspectives.

METHODS

Examining the phenomenon of interprovincial labor migration in Canada to date, it has become apparent that a gap in knowledge specific to understanding the experiences of those who leave for work, family members who are left behind, and the resulting impact on rural communities exists. This labor migration trend is particularly relevant in the Atlantic Canadian provinces, where high numbers of laborers are working outside of their home province. Due to the Freedom of Mobility Act, specific statistics are not known, nor kept, regarding the actual percentage of people leaving the Atlantic Region on a temporary basis for employment in another province (Murray, 2014). The lack of data specific to temporary inter-provincial employment patterns is problematic, as it is difficult to gauge how many people are claiming permanent residency in one province yet is employed on a temporary or full-time basis in another. Without having measures in place to quantify population trends specific to temporary labor migration, there exists a gap in understanding the magnitude of this phenomenon. Further understanding how families and communities are impacted is near impossible. However, this information is vital if we are to find strategies to support individuals, families, and communities affected by temporary labor migration. While there has been research conducted regarding labor migration and how it was experienced by men who left for employment out of province in Cape Breton (Wray, 2012; Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018) and women who were left behind and living in Prince Edward Island (Murray, 2014), there remained a gap in research specific to the family experiences of labor migration from both an interdisciplinary and cross-regional, Maritime Canadian perspective.

To address this knowledge gap, the research team engaged in a multi-faceted, three-year research study examining the familial

and community impacts of labor migration. Titled The Tale of Two Islands, this was to our knowledge, the first Canadian study to examine interprovincial labor migration and its impact on intergenerational family members, and rural communities. The objectives of this study were to; compare and contrast how temporary labor migration was being experienced by those who leave for employment, their partners who are left behind and caring for children, and their extended family which may include grandparents, brothers and/or sisters who provide a supportive role to the family; to compare and contrast how the temporary labor migration of family members influenced perceptions of family roles, family cohesion, and evolution by those who are leaving for employment and those who are left behind; and, to, elicit an intersectoral perspective regarding how labor migration to the oil and gas sectors of Northern Alberta shaped family evolution and community development across Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton Island.

To achieve our goal and objectives of this study, an interdisciplinary research team from the Faculties of Nursing and Business across from two academic institutions (University of Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton University) in two Atlantic Canadian provinces (Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia) engaged in a wide array of data collection methods across our two provinces including a systematic literature review and quantitative analysis of oil and gas income remittances and the impact of these on the Atlantic Canadian economy (Donatelli et al., 2017; Lionais et al., 2020). Using a form of narrative inquiry research (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Connelly and Clandinin, 2006), the research team also engaged in conversational intergenerational family interviews (N33) with men who traveled for employment, their wives who remained in the community and cared for their children and extended family members such as grandparents who provided a supportive role; semi-structured key informant interviews with community-based professionals (Donatelli et al., 2017) who worked directly with mobile families (N24); and also conducted three focus group interviews (N24); one with women whose husbands worked out of province, and two with grandparents (grandmothers and grandfathers) who lived in the family's rural community and provided support to their families who had a loved one working away. Each phase of qualitative data collection; conversational family interviews, semi-structured key informant interviews, and focus group interviews, occurred simultaneously across our two Islands to discover similarities and differences in how family experiences and community impacts. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton University.

Dewey's theory of experience was a central theoretical underpinning that guided the qualitative aspects of our research and is central to how narrative inquiry has been conceptualized by Clandinin and Connelly (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Dewey views experience to be a continuous interaction of human thought within our personal, social, and material environment resulting in experiences that continually occur over time and are recalled in light of present and future experiences (Dewey, 1986). Data collection instruments developed for the study aligned with Dewey's theory of experience with questions asked illuminating time; past, present and future; personal and social relationships; those between family and

community members, and environment; that being life in rural communities. Dewey's theory of experience was also central to how the project team approached thematic analysis. The goal of narrative inquiry research is to increase understanding and/or explain the meaning and significance of experiences through the sharing of stories. The process of telling and listening to stories is common to the human experience of being in the world and relating with others. Storytelling holds a cultural significance in Cape Breton as collective family narratives illuminate ancestral historical evolution, and how families have been shaped by their place within the community (Corbin and Rolls, 1996). The importance of storytelling is also apparent within the context of family evolution and development in Prince Edward Island.

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. NVIVO software was used for initial data analysis with codes and themes identified. Further analysis occurred through multiple team meetings where the team examined multiple narratives illuminated as they pertained to roles and relationships among family members and community, temporarily of experiences - past, present and future and community impacts and interconnections. As intergenerational family members shared their stories of experience regarding how labor migration impacted their families, we also gained an increased understanding and awareness regarding how labor migration impacted rural communities in Atlantic Canada. This paper weaves together varied experiences and narratives that reveal how the coming and going for employment in the oil and gas sectors in Northern Alberta impacted family and community life in Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton Islands.

Findings of this research revealed how family members and professionals who work with families in Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton Island view labor migration to impact individuals, households, and communities. Drawing upon conversational intergenerational family interviews and key informant interviews we will share how participants conceptualize their rural communities and rural life. We will highlight how these perceptions vary significantly between those who leave the community for employment and those who are left behind. Particularly, we will illuminate the interconnectedness of place to family evolution in light of contrasting societal perceptions of gendered and familial norms. We will also present how these perceptions have contributed to feelings of being negatively judged by others in the community which has contributed to increased social isolation and a decreased sense of belonging, which has impacted their families' participation in community activities.

RESULTS

During multiple individual conversational, key informant and focus group interviews, participants shared their stories of experience related to interprovincial labor migration. These experiences illuminated how men and women as husbands and wives conceptualized their experiences of mobile work and how this impacted role functioning, family development and their perceptions of community and rural life. Various practitioners interviewed across P.E.I and Cape Breton Island identified the

many challenges and difficulties experienced by families impacted by interprovincial labor migration. These were often attributed to perpetual periods of family separation and reunification. The stability of a family unit that permanently lives together day in and day is gone, replaced by a certain uncertainty that is associated with interprovincial labor mobility. These families experience first-hand how their community engagement differs from other families living in the community not involved in interprovincial migration. The state of mobility that these families experience often generates barriers and obstacles for them to participate in various events and volunteer activities occurring in their local community.

Analysis of our data revealed that men and women had differing opinions in regard to their sense of place attachment to their rural home communities. All men and women interviewed considered at least once, permanently moving to Western Canada so that their families could be geographically closer together in hopes of seeing each other more frequently. Men participating in our study reported that they lived less than 25% of the year with their families and in these Island communities, however in spite of their frequent absence, they felt a strong sense of place and always referred to these communities as home. Men were rooted in their communities and could not imagine their families moving away. They spoke of Alberta being the place where they worked whereas their PEI or Cape Breton communities was home. As one participant explained; *"We weighed the pros and cons and it always comes down to staying. We have talked about it, but when we actually sit down and weigh the pros and cons, it's just not worth it. It's easier for me to go than it is for everyone (the family) to go. At the end of the day, I am still going to be working 2 weeks on and 1 week off or 3 weeks on and 1-week shift and I'm going to be in a workcamp. When I think about raising my own family, I didn't want to do it in Alberta. I wanted to do it at home. Unless we are forced into it, we absolutely do not want to move out there. Our families are here, my favorite people are here. This community is where we live, it' a part of us. My parents live down the road from us, not far at all. That is why we are here. We are not going anywhere."*

Men interviewed also spoke about the sense of safety and security that they felt having their families living in a rural community. They identified the increased prevalence of illegal drug and alcohol use, crime, lack of social support and the high cost of living as additional reasons why they would not want their families moving to Alberta. In contrast to these views, women participating in our study, expressed a yearning to move away from PEI and Cape Breton so that their families could be together more often and develop as a unit without the iterative patterns of separation and reunification. Reasons for this included being able to escape perceived judgment from others living in the community, having an opportunity to be physically and emotionally closer to their spouse, and having their children to spend more time with their father. As one woman revealed, *"He is a country boy, and we live on the same road as his parents and where he grew up. He's not having his kids grow up anywhere but here. He never wants to leave. I would leave in a second. I don't like living in a small community at all."*

Many of the participants in our study described life in their rural communities to be both a positive and negative experience for their families. As one participant phrased it *"[y]ou know everybody which is good in a way and not in others."* The dynamics of rural community is a balance. One characteristic that draws people to live in a rural area is the sense of community that comes from knowing the members of your community and also being known by them in return. However, a downfall of a close-knit community is the judgment cast when everyone knows each other and knows what is happening throughout the community. Without connections firmly established, it is easy to feel excluded in rural communities. Creating these connections is especially challenging for mobile families. As a Church Minister shared during a key informant interview, *"things take time, relationships with small communities, they have to trust you and you have to build it up."* This statement frames what is necessary in order to build community in rural spaces. It requires time and energy to build connections and a sense of community within a rural area; something frequently lacking when a member of the community is present so infrequently.

The nature of interprovincial labor migration detracts from the time and energy that mobile families possess. When men return home, they are less likely to engage in their community as they are focused on making up for lost time with their family. While their partners work away women take on the role and responsibilities of their partner in addition to their own role as a participant explained; *"Most people live a life where every day is relatively the same. For people like us who do this, it's like living two lives. You become a Jill of all trades."*

Men who are working away feel distant from their local community due to the physical distance between their work and their home. This can complicate communications with family and friends back home, especially when something unexpected occurs. A participant explained; *"When you're out there working and something happens to someone or goes on at home, someone gets ill, it's tough on a man. You're far away, and you're wondering what to do."* Work in Western Canada is accompanied by a three to four-hour time difference. For some families, the solution to the time difference is that they need to schedule phone calls and other forms of communication. This structured form of communication can cause a feeling of disconnection. The time difference also adds to the traveling time to come home. Jetlag detracts from the time the husband gets to spend at home in the community. This perpetuates feelings of distance. Additionally, the areas where these men are working often do not have adequate technology to maintain consistent communication with their families at home (LeDrew et al., 2018). This can result in men not receiving regular updates regarding the happenings in their families and home communities.

Many men in our study identified that if they were not away for work, they would be actively volunteering in their communities. Volunteer fire fighting, coaching sports, and engaging in a local church are all forms of volunteering that these men described missing out on. A participant explained; *"There's no opportunity or time to volunteer or get involved with a lot of things . . . you don't get the chance to consistently be there for the community . . . you get less opportunity to be with people in your community, even your neighbors."* Due to increased familial responsibilities women whose husbands work away often do not have the time to

participate in their communities. A key informant practitioner explained; *"women are so busy with their children they don't participate in community events."*

Men who participated in the study also shared that the longer they participated in interprovincial labor mobility, the less connected they felt to their home communities. A participant described this by saying, *"I work away and haven't been here much for three and a half years. It feels like home to me, but it doesn't feel like I'm part of the community."* This is an important acknowledgment as rural identity is connected to a sense of closeness within your community. Another man reflected on a conversation he had when he was at home when a had friend mentioned his neighbors whom he did not know. This would be very unusual for members of this community not to know one another. He shared; *"They are just two houses down the road, and I don't know who they are. I'm never here so I'm not in the loop."*

Women shared that they felt that they were being judged by others in the community because their husbands were employed in Western Canada. They discussed at length comments that they had heard from community members regarding how wealthy their families were because their husbands worked out of province and how they chose this lifestyle so that they would be better off financially than the rest of the community. A participant revealed; *"I always get comments about how he is bringing home the big bucks That's all they talk about as soon as I go anywhere. I don't like it. I don't like going to the store because I know as soon as I walk out someone is going to be talking about me...Everyone makes everyone feel insecure about this."* In contrast her husband dismissed this to simple gossip and felt that; *"with every community there is gossip and it's just the way it is here."* From his perspective the gossip is not targeting his wife as a result of his work, but rather he attributed it to living in a small community.

Women also felt judgment from others in their home communities regarding the strength of their relationship with their husband. Since their husband is gone for long periods of time there was speculation by some community members regarding the stability of their marital relationships. Participants identified that they chose to attend an adult social event, such as a dance, by themselves, it could be interpreted by members of the community as an attempt to begin an extramarital affair. The fear of this judgment was frequently cited as a reason why women did not feel comfortable participating in community activities while their husbands were working away. It also contributed to increased feelings of stress, anxiety, shame and embarrassment which took a toll on women's mental health. A social worker explained during a key informant interview, *"I think these folks are overrepresented in community mental health ... you've got really worn-out moms who are stressed out and wanting to go off work or visiting their doctor more often because they can't cope."* The differing gendered experience was reinforced by men who did not report experiencing feelings of judgment by others in their home communities because they worked out of province.

Continuing along this theme, some women participating in our study felt that they did not "fit in" with the community when their husband was working away. One participant shared that when her husband is away, she does not like to engage in social activities alone because it makes her "stand out." This concept of standing out is an interesting one. There was a shared sentiment among these women that because they are married, yet often live apart from their husbands, that they are different from other women and families in their community who have their husbands living with them in their home communities. The feelings of difference that these women perceive may be exaggerated by the nature of rural life where communities abide by commonalities of shared experiences (Haugen and Brandth, 2015). If someone no longer aligns with the societal norms of the community, they are "othered" (Haugen and Brandth, 2015). Women perceived that they and their family form was different and in turn, felt othered by their community. They felt alone in their experience and even though other women in their social circles also had husbands who were working away. This perception was illuminated by a participant who shared that she felt as though she was one whose husband worked in Western Canada. In contrast, her husband noticed a stark absence of fathers at their daughter's birthday party; *"there were seven mothers there, no fathers. They are all working out west. Seven."*

DISCUSSION

The historically weak economies in Atlantic Canada have led to a longstanding relationship between rural communities and mobile work. During our research we discovered multiple contradictory examples of how life in rural communities is perceived to be different by husbands who leave for work and their wives who remain behind. Husbands viewed their wives to be enveloped by communities of support, where they are surrounded by other women who also have a loved one traveling out of province for work. Men tend to view community gossip as a function of rural life, not as a result of the mobile nature of his work. This presents an interesting insight into the dichotomy of perceptions between husbands and wives equally impacted by the same phenomenon of mobile labor. Contrastingly, their wives perceived that they bear the brunt of community gossip and judgment as a direct result of their husbands work in Western Canada.

It is challenging to estimate exactly how many families are engaged in interprovincial labor migration however, one teacher who participated in a key informant interview, estimated that 15 to 20 percent of children attending their school had a father who was working out of province. While the impact of interprovincial labor mobility on children was not within the scope of this particular study, all participants spoke about the ways in which they noticed this phenomenon impacting children left behind. The notion of prevalence in rural PEI and Cape Breton communities was also apparent among other participants during key informant interviews. These practitioners estimated that one out of every four or five families living in their rural communities were impacted by interprovincial labor mobility.

Projections such as these, while not substantiated, could translate into a large portion of families who are living in rural communities and experiencing additional challenges and stressors as a result of having a loved one employed out of province. With this in mind, it is critical for communities to

begin to recognize how having a loved one working away impacts families and develop supportive interventions that are responsive to their unique needs. Having community support that is perceived as welcoming and not judgmental has the possibility to change the experiences of mobile families. Through enhanced programming and targeted interventions, families could meet other families also living in the community and develop increased support networks that could reduce feeling of loneliness, isolation. This could lead to greater investment and engagement in activities occurring in rural communities.

Both husbands and wives acknowledge a disconnect from their home community. The husband's perspective of this difference is grounded in perceptions of physical distance. His distance from the community is viewed as a result of his absence from their home community. However, women attributed their disconnect lack of time due to their increased family roles and responsibilities and perceptions of judgment by others in the community. However, it is important to acknowledge that families are not the only party negatively impacted by interprovincial labor migration. The community as a whole is disadvantaged through the exclusion of these families. For example, male role models are lacking in the community. A participant suggested that an increased emphasis needs to be placed on bolstering local economies so that that families do not need to live apart. They identified that, "it would be nice to have people working in the community and prospering in the community. People would be proud of that."

CONCLUSION

The Tale of Two Islands project offers an example of how mobile work impacts families and communities in Atlantic Canada. While this form of labor has positively benefited the economies of Atlantic Canadian communities, it has come at a social cost. Throughout this paper we have examined how interprovincial labor migration impacts mobile families and the rural communities they call home. Perceptions of interprovincial labor migration differed between the men that travel for employment in Western Canada and their wives who remained behind in their rural Island home communities. Men who engage in this work are not physically present in their family units or communities. While working away, men felt that they were missing out on an opportunity to contribute to their rural communities such as volunteering in community organizations or in activities where they could provide leadership and be a role model to others. In contrast, wives who remain behind and live in the rural community while their husbands work away are physically present and could participate in community activities yet are reluctant to as a result of increased familial roles, responsibilities and perceived judgements from community members. These are attributed to societal pressures and traditional views of gendered norms associated to men, women and families who live in rural communities (Wathen and Harris, 2007; Leipert and George, 2008; Haugen and Brandth, 2015; LeDrew et al., 2018).

Communities and families impacted by interprovincial labor migration are constantly shifting and changing, responding and adapting, in order to adapt to a mobile lifestyle characterized by periods of reunification and separation. While this paper has illuminated contrasting views among men who travel for work and their wives that remain behind in their home communities, these families have chosen to remain in their rural community as they embark in a mobile lifestyle. This decision is largely based on a desire to belong and have a sense of connectedness to their communities. Ultimately, the outcomes of their decision to remain rooted in their community are inherently gendered. Therefore, changes surrounding mobile work in rural communities need to be addressed in light of the impact gender roles have on the experiences of mobile families in rural spaces.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the University of Prince Edward Island Research Ethics Committee and Cape Breton University Research Ethics Committee. All participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CM was the principal investigator on the Tale of Two Islands project and led the conversational interview, key informant and focus group interview phase of the project. She co-supervised graduate and undergraduate research assistants and conceptualized all phases of the Tale of Two Island research design, participated in data collection, data analysis, and in the writing, reviewing and editing of all aspects of this manuscript. She obtained research-funding acquisition for the study, and was the project administrator. HS was the graduate student research intern assigned to the Tale of Two Islands project. She contributed to the writing, reviewing and editing of all phases of this manuscript. DL was a co-investigator on the Tale of Two Islands project. He conceptualized the Tale of Two Islands research design, participated in data collection, data analysis, reviewing and editing this manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the submitted version of this manuscript.

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Contingent Relations: Migrant Wellbeing and Economic Development in Rural Manitoba

Catherine Bryan*

School of Social Work, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, Canada

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in rural Manitoba and the Philippines, this paper uses the example of the small town of Douglas, which since 2009 has been home to a small Filipino community, as a tenuous counter-point to the accounts of exclusion that dominate the scholarship on Temporary Foreign Labour in Canada. This paper draws on ethnographic research conducted in Manitoba with the region's newest immigrants—those recruited to ensure the viability of the new, diversified rural regional economy, and more specifically, the tourism and hospitality sector, established in the 1970s. In 2009, unable to meet its labour needs regionally, a local hotel began recruiting temporary foreign labour. By 2014, the Hotel had recruited 71 workers from the Philippines, most of whom arrived through Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program; others having arrived through the province's immigration scheme, the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP). A reflection of the ubiquity of globalized Filipino migration, the well-being of these workers had long been informed by economic development in the Philippines and the centrality of international labour mobility to that state project. What emerges from the data is a simultaneous acceptance and contestation of the conditions of transnational family life, and moreover—reflecting the focus of this special issue—the extent to which migrant well-being shifts in accordance to labour mobility regimes responsive to development. Migrant workers and their families are implicated in these connected, yet differently motivated, state projects. And while particular narratives concerning their contributions come to be valorized and even celebrated, their mental, physical, affective, and relational well-being is often over-looked by those who benefit from their labour and mobility. Of equal importance is the provincial state's participation in this process through the provision of permanent residency to existing and in-coming migrants. While this benefits individual families, it does not inherently challenge the logics of neoliberalism; rather, drawing on its nuances, it create new possibilities for capital accumulation and exploitation, while offering some protection for select families who are willing and able to abide by the terms established by their employer and the Manitoba state.

Keywords: migrant labour, manitoba, rural economic development, migrant wellbeing, service and hospitality

INTRODUCTION

Tracing the exploitative potential of temporary labour migration and its value for economic and social development in both sending- and receiving-sites, this article highlights a somewhat anomalous immigrant labour recruitment strategy undertaken in collaboration by rural employers and the Manitoban government. It does so as a means of elaborating the contingent relationship between migrant wellbeing, rural economic development, and the partial or potential social inclusion increasingly on offer by the Canadian state, via Provincial Nominee Programs. While this inclusion emerges as a possible win for employers and workers alike, in a global context characterized by high levels of migrant vulnerability, dependence, and precarity, it also shrouds the underlying exploitative logic of labour migration schemes historically and in the contemporary neoliberal moment. Furthermore, it obscures how the potential of permanency can be deployed by employers and government alike to anchor low-cost labour in place as means of ensuring the profitability of small-scale capitalist enterprise. More precisely, this article draws on the first 5 years of migrant labour recruitment by a small, rural hotel and conference centre in the town of Douglas, Manitoba. 3.75 km-squared with a permanent population of approximately 1700 people, the town is a thoroughfare for most: truckers, mobile construction crews, regional travelers, and tourists arrive with some frequency at the Hotel or its adjacent amenities, staying for the night, a few days, or—in the case of construction crews—a few weeks. Like many rural centres across the Canadian prairies (Moss et al., 2010; Nakache and Blanchard, 2014; Bucklaschuk, 2015; Wright et al., 2017), the labour required of meeting the needs of these temporarily mobile people has fallen to a largely migrant workforce, comprised predominantly of Filipino workers, though more recently, workers from the Caribbean (Bryan 2019a; Bryan, 2019b).

A reflection of the ubiquity of globalized Filipino migration, the well-being of these workers and their families has long been informed by economic development in the Philippines and the centrality of international labour mobility to that state project. Indeed, all of the migrants interviewed had protracted experience with migration and had long relied on overseas employment to meet their families' social reproductive needs. What emerges from the data is a simultaneous acceptance and contestation of the conditions of transnational family life, and moreover—reflecting the focus of this special issue—the extent to which migrant well-being shifts in accordance to labour mobility regimes responsive to development. These regimes are, at once, those of the Philippines, which seeks to redress social and economic instability in that country through labour export; of Canada, which aims to secure precarious and dependent migrant (read temporary) labour for local labour markets; and of Manitoba, which seeks out new resident-workers to safe-guard rural economies against the volatility of neoliberal transition within traditional sectors—notably, agriculture, mining, and logging. Migrant workers and their families are implicated in these connected, yet differently motivated, state projects. And while particular narratives concerning their contributions come to be valorized and even celebrated (particularly in the Philippines and Manitoba), their mental, physical, affective, and relational well-being

is often over-looked by those who benefit from their labour and mobility. Embedded in protracted and transnational histories of colonialism and capitalism, migrant well-being is an affective and material state that is always in process, responding to the changing conditions and requirements of capital accumulation across manifold sites. Indeed, migrants abide by the norms of "transnational Filipino family", while actively seeking out alternatives. For the migrants at the centre of this analysis, the desire for a family-life "in place" has prompted a unique relationship with their employer who draws on the networks of its Filipino workforce in the recruitment and retention of labour.

Taking as its starting point state-affect discourse concerning health and wellness, the article begins with a discussion of migrant wellbeing. Following a description of the study's methods, the first substantive section unpacks migrant wellbeing in relation to legal status. Whereas permanent residents and immigrant citizens are able to avail themselves of state-provided health and wellness services, temporary foreign workers are largely excluded. At the same time, they are often centred in emotionally driven debate concerning the wellbeing of "local" labour. Importantly, "local" labour—or rather its shortage—is often at the core of employer demands vis-à-vis the state and the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. Across sectors and regions, the argument made by employers is that due to a lack of available local resident-workers, they require a policy mechanism through which to recruit non-resident workers. As elsewhere, in Manitoba's rural tourism and hospitality sector, this argument is frequently grounded in well-known and accepted tropes of rural depopulation. Less on offer are the structural reasons for depopulation, and more significantly, the unwillingness of local labour to take up employment in the sector. Indeed, in conversation with long-standing local residents, including those who make up the Hotel's local clientele, strong preference for the working conditions, schedules, and wages of construction, transportation, and care labour is often expressed.

Elaborated in the second section, the region's economy transformed in the early 1970s. Integrated more fully into international markets, increasingly mechanized, and requiring staggering amounts of capital investment, agriculture was no longer a viable livelihood option for the majority of rural residents. In turn, working with government, local business sought to diversify the economy. Intended to establish new revenue streams *and* local employment opportunities, tourism surfaced as a key strategy. However, despite the creation of new jobs, local resident workers have tended to seek out employment elsewhere—an outcome of the low-wages and low-status often associated with service and hospitality work. Thus, the sector, which was established in the 1970s and expanded in the 1990s, has had to rely on migrant workers to remain profitable. The focus of section three, the labour supporting the on-going economic development of Manitoba's rural tourism sector has not been "local", but rather "global" labour that is set in motion through the efforts of the Philippine states on the one hand, and the Canadian state on the other.

Recruited to ensure the viability of Manitoba's new diversified rural regional economy, and more specifically, the tourism and

hospitality sector, the first wave of these workers arrived between 2009 and 2014 and were deployed across the Hotel's various departments. All but one of the initial 71 migrants recruited by the Hotel would become permanent residents—with a large majority becoming Canadian citizens within 5 years of the completion of the study (by 2019). Representing a key distinction between migrant labour recruitment in other Canadian jurisdictions and globally, the Hotel deploys permanency—made possible through Manitoba's immigration scheme, the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program—as a labour recruitment and retention strategy. From this labour migration scenario, section four provides several ethnographic examples of Filipino family life and migrant wellbeing as constituted and re-constituted through sub-national immigration policy in Canada that seeks to make permanent once temporary foreign workers. Central to this discussion is the contentious and contingent status of "wellbeing" as an analytical category and desired outcome, particularly as applied to migrants, whose wellness in Canada often hinges on legal status. Even more broadly, when situated in the protracted and transnational histories of colonialism and capitalism, migrant wellbeing loses any solid or consistent quality. Providing the central analytical contribution of the paper, the final discussion section posits migrant wellbeing as an affective and material state that, responsive to the changing conditions of capitalist political economy across manifold sites and the requirements of capital accumulation overtime, is always in process. Reflective of the pervasive inequality that undergirds global labour migration regimes, this remains true even where permanent residency is on offer and where employers and states appear invested, on some level, in migrant "wellbeing". Importantly, then, for this work, while "wellbeing" is used as a proxy for the positive emotional, relational, and physical health outcomes of permanency as anticipated and subjectively experienced by the Hotel's migrant workers, it remains tied to state development projects that undercut the possibility of "wellness" for most migrants globally. As argued, migrants are responsibilized by both sending- and receiving-states for their own wellbeing in contexts characterized by high levels of state-sanctioned exploitability. An exception that proves and reinforces the rule, those at the centre of this analysis were able circumvent some of the vulnerability ad precarity endemic in most labour migration scenarios, but yet, remained bound to the logics and demands of temporary forms of labour mobility.

METHODS

As Wolf illustrates across his scholarship, rather than "encompassing the whole world in a homogeneous field of effects", capitalism generates "variability and differentiation not only through its combination with other modes [of production] but also in the very course of its own operations" (Wolf, 2010, p. 303). Following from this, inequality and stratification—that is, the ordering of inequality—are generated by, and generative of, the capitalist mode of production. Moreover, they are necessary mechanisms of accumulation as value is mobilized and transferred between

sites. The arrival of Filipino workers in Douglas reflects such a transfer in the form of labour power. At the same time, when we account for the social geographies and political economies of each site and the ways in which both have been integrated in complex ways into the circuits of global capitalism over time, the story of Philippine workers in Douglas offers something far more complicated: insight not only into the arrival of 71 people in Douglas, but into the coalescing and contingent relationships and dynamics that over time, have produced the conditions conducive to that arrival. In the ethnographic tradition of Wolf (2010), and like other anthropologists engaged in studies of political economy (Carrier and Kalb, 2015; Kasmir and Carbonella, 2017) and migration (Mahler and Pessar, 2006; Brettell and Hollifield, 2014), this article elaborates the connection between migrant wellbeing and these multi-sited relationships and dynamics as they relate to economic development in rural Manitoba.

Data for this analysis was collected by the author between 2012 and 2014 with 71 migrant workers recruited to work in Manitoba's new, diversified rural regional economy, and more specifically, the tourism and hospitality sector, established (though tenuously) in the 1970s, and their non-migrant kin in the Philippines. In total, 131 in-depth life history interviews were conducted in Manitoba and sites across the Philippines. These interviews focused on the labour mobility histories of 21 transnational family groups (totalling 81 individuals: 21 migrants and 60 non-migrant kin) and 50 additional migrants in Douglas whose families, in the Philippines, did not participate in the study. Fieldwork was conducted in four installments over a 2 year period. At each stage, different kinds of data were gathered. In the first instance (December 2012), in-depth interviews were conducted with the Hotel's Philippine workforce. At the time, only 44 foreign workers had been recruited by the Hotel. Of these, 43 had arrived through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program since 2009, and one had arrived through the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program. During this first visit, in-depth interviews were conducted with 25 of the Hotel's Filipino workers, as well as with one TFW who had initially arrived (2011) in Manitoba to work at an industrial hog barn, 1 h north of Douglas, but was currently employed at the local veterinary hospital. These interviews were focused on each participant's labour migration history, reasons for seeking out overseas employment, work experience at the Hotel, and transnational kinship practices.

Conducted in the Philippines, the second phase of research was designed to capture the lives and experiences of those "left behind" and "in waiting"—non-migrants who came to be integrated and implicated in transnational strategies of livelihood and reproduction through the labour migration of a spouse, a parent, a child, or a sibling. In the Philippines, 60 non-migrant family members were interviewed. The third and fourth stages of research were conducted in Douglas. At each stage of research conducted in Douglas, interviews and follow-up interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders: Hotel management, the regional settlement workers, and a local economic development officer. During each phase, interviews were supplemented with participant observation in both Douglas (at the Hotel) and in the Philippines. Additional in-depth interviews were done with Hotel management, regional economic development officers, the regional settlement services

provider, and several long-standing local business owners. Archival research was conducted in both the regional economic development office and the provincial archive (located in Winnipeg). Here, the objective was to better understand state practices and adjoining discourses vis-à-vis development overtime.

MIGRANT WELLBEING

The popularization of "wellbeing" as a research focus and more recently, as a policy objective, reveals a highly contested concept (Sointu, 2005; Schwanen and Atkinson, 2015). Critics of the term have also pointed to its vulnerability to commodification and neoliberal appropriation (Esposito and Perez, 2014). Under these conditions, wellbeing becomes an exercise in self-management, whereby individuals avail themselves of privately provisioned goods and services in the pursuit of a "wellness" bound to middle-class conceptualizations of the "good life" (Firth, 2016). Reading together the growing prevalence of resiliency narratives (Howard et al., 1999; Fletcher and Sarkar, 2013; MacKinnon and Derickson, 2013), the retrenchment of the welfare state (Starke, 2006), the emergence of workfare policies and programs (Peck, 2001; Gazso and McDaniel, 2010), scholars argue that the state's promotion of wellness is more broadly a strategy intended to ensure employability and the capacity of labour to withstand precarity and uncertainty. This strategy, however, is not uniformly applied to all workers. Migrants—particularly those whose legal status is tenuous or who are undocumented—are largely excluded from such discourses. In Canada, this exclusion is formalized through the restrictive parameters of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program that, for most migrant workers, prohibit family reunification and limit access to health care.

If temporary migrant workers are excluded from neoliberal state affect discourse in the site of employment, they are often central to emotionally driven narratives concerning "local" labour and its relative value. For example, between 2012 and 2014, following several highly publicized tragedies and controversies (CBC, 2011; CBC, 2012a; CBC, 2012b), the Temporary Worker Program became the subject of considerable public and political debate. While some of this focused on the exploitative conditions engendered by the program (CBC, 2013; CBC, 2014a; CBC, 2014b; CBC, 2014c), the perception that citizen- and resident-workers were being excluded from labour markets as employers became reliant on temporary foreign workers dominated public discussions (CBC, 2014d; CBC, 2014e; CBC, 2014f; CBC, 2014g). Despite some attention paid to working and living conditions in Canada, much of the media coverage during this period spun those realities to highlight the value-added offered by migrant labour. Reduced to units of labour, the aspirations and health of migrants are frequently regarded by employers and governments as tangential to the operations of capital accumulation. In contrast, drawing on the experiences of the migrant workers at the centre of this analysis, migration is, for many, a high-stakes investment in the material and social well-being of family and kin. In a context that mostly overlooks the migrant well-being, not only does the project of migration require considerable planning,

sacrifice, and risk-taking, it often demands intensive emotional regulation (Bryan, 2017; Bryan, 2018; Hochschild, 2000; Hochschild, 2012). Given shape by what Tungohan (2018) calls ideational factors—the ideological narratives and cultural scripts that explain and rationalize wide-spread labour migration from the Philippines—this affective labour is used to navigate and survive the often times toxic character of life and labour for migrant workers in Canada.

Over the last ten years, a considerable scholarship has emerged that explores and documents the subjectively experienced physical, emotional, mental, and material wellbeing of migrants or their kin (both migrant and non-migrant), either in the context of resettlement or the country of origin (Gushulak et al., 2011; Spitzer, 2011; Wright, 2011; Berry and Hou, 2016; Campos-Flores and Dabrowska-Miciula, 2018; Caxaj and Diaz, 2018). Largely bifurcated, this academic literature corresponds either to landed immigrants (those who arrive as permanent residents) or migrant labour (those who arrive with a temporary designation), with government intervention focused largely on the former. In regard to permanently settled newcomers, the research effectively highlights a range of structural barriers related to language proficiency (Pot et al., 2020), racism and xenophobia, credential recognition, and employment (Aycan and Berry, 1996). These are seen as negatively impacting wellbeing in so far as they limit access to meaningful employment and supportive services (such as healthcare), and they are seen as having inter-generation effects (Berry and Hou, 2016; Hadfield et al., 2017). Thus, in this literature, the function of immigration policy as generating vulnerability and precarity is not centred; instead, the social, cultural, and economic context that condition the experience of integration is prioritized, as well as the intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression informing that context. When taken up by the state, these insights filter into a gamut of services and programs intended to equip newcomers with the skills required to navigate less-than-welcoming environments, thereby—in principle—maximizing their wellbeing.

In addition to the scholarship on immigrant wellbeing, an important body of literature captures the mental and physical health outcomes associated with temporary labour migration (Bernhard et al., 2007; Fuller and Vosko, 2008; Bahn, 2015; Caxaj and Diaz, 2018; Salami et al., 2015). While many of the experiences are similar, mapping onto social inequity, racism and other forms discrimination in Canada, for those who arrive as temporary foreign workers, wellbeing may be further adversely effected by exposure to workplace injury and illness, and compounded by an inability to access health care (following the restrictions of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program) (Hennebry et al., 2016; Preibisch and Hennebry, 2011). For some workers, notably those in agricultural, this is further exacerbated by inadequate housing and sanitation, a lack of clean water, and proximity to chemicals and pesticides (Magalhaes et al., 2010; Helps, 2020). In addition to physical outcomes, poor mental health outcomes are also common. Here, poor and exploitative working conditions coalesce with challenging work relationships, communication barriers, loneliness, and separation from significant relations and supports. Amongst these features of migrant life, the fear of

deportation and repatriation—an outcome of state policy, is often the most destabilizing, as it taps into, not only insecurities and inequalities that exist in the site of employment, but those endemic in the sending-state and affecting of non-migrant kin (Walia, 2010; Perry, 2012; Nakache, 2018; Perry 2018). Different from the literature on permanently resettled migrants, this scholarship focuses considerably on the effects of immigration policy in Canada (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2005) and emigration policy in the Philippines. While not always considered in tandem, both are regarded as directly and negatively impacting the physical and mental health, and wellbeing, of migrant workers. Running adjacent, is a significant critique of the lack of state-funded services for this cohort of workers once in Canada (Dabrowska-Miciula and de Lima, 2020). Here, in the absence supports (such as healthcare), migrant workers vend for themselves or rely on the (inconsistent) benevolence of their employers.

Despite important consideration of the policy that facilitates labour migration and determines its conditions, less visible in this scholarship are the adjacent policy regimes that generate the purported need for temporary migrant labour in the first place. In other words, the focus tends to be on the individual or shared outcomes of migrants as they follow from the restrictions of—in the case of Canada—the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. And yet, the TFWP is, itself, a response to a set of conditions and processes related to economic development that are historic, contemporary, highlight local, and transnational in character. Importantly, then, migrant wellbeing is relational; it responds to opportunities and obstacles that are situated at the intersection of local, national, and international immigration regimes that collate with similarly scaled labour markets, economies, and state development projects. Equally absent from this literature is consideration of effects of the transition or potential transition to permanent residency. While permanent residency status is held out as a solution to the damaging effects of temporary labour programs (Nakache and Blanchard, 2014), with some notable exceptions (Polanco, 2014; Bonifacio, 2015; Tungohan et al., 2015; Polanco, 2016; Bryan, 2019a), little has been published on the actual implications of transitioning to permanency for temporary foreign workers and their kin. In addition to redressing this, this paper also illustrates the ways in which the "taken-for-granted" good of permanency can also be harnessed by state and capital to hold migrants in place, and to duplicate hierarchies and structures of accumulation that benefit employers. Thus, while a laudable objective, wellbeing, when bound to processes that allow some workers (and not others) to transition to permanent residency, merely reinforces the individualism of neoliberal wellness

LOCAL HOSPITALITY; GLOBAL LABOUR

In rural Manitoba, where the population is sparse and out-migration common (Silvius and Annis, 2007), the challenges of labour recruitment and retention are frequently rehearsed by employers and local government. This challenge—or the perception of it—accelerates in the service and hospitality

sector that, historically feminized, is characterized by precarity, low-wages, and low-status (Bryan, 2018). In the region, service and hospitality is closely aligned with the region's tourism sector, which emerged as an economic diversification strategy in the late 1960s and accelerated in the 1990s. Intended to redress and sustain emerging trends in agriculture, specifically, consolidation and intensification, tourism, it was held by local and provincial officials, would ensure the on-going viability of agricultural production, albeit in a modified form, through the creation of new economic opportunities, and most importantly, new local jobs. Tourism, in other words, was to run adjacent to agriculture, bolstering the rural economy and creating the conditions necessary for agricultural production to survive its neoliberal reorientation.

Beginning in the 1960s, the economic structure of industrialized countries, like Canada, began to change at an increased rate, prompted by the growing internationalization of capital markets, higher levels of transnational investment, and the gradual emergence of nascent neoliberal doctrine and practice (Ghorayshi, 1990). Reflective of a larger project of rural economic development, which took as its starting point the restructuring of the agricultural sector, tourism was to redress *and* sustain emerging trends in agriculture—notably, consolidation and intensification. This two-pronged objective would be achieved through the diversification of the rural economy, which, in turn, could continue to support agricultural production. Much like elsewhere in the province, then, tourism in the region is not seen as cure-all to rural economic decline; rather, as Ramsey and Everitt (2007) explain, it is regarded as a "smokeless industry", offering additional and sustainable economic security for rural communities. An economic additive, tourism has been integrated into existing sectors of the rural economy—wilderness, forestry, hunting and angling, sports, arts, culture, and heritage. Officials, and those involved in the sector, stress the potential manifold positive outcomes for local businesses and local tax bases. These benefits are generated by visitors, and by those who work in the industry, and it is anticipated, will create and sustain local employment, bolstering the rural economy, and safe-guarding the future of rural-life. Following this logic, recreation and tourism have come to significantly inform the social and economic agendas of the region, even as agricultural production and its off-shoots remain dominant (Kulshreshtha, 2011).

Reflective of the tertiary sector more generally (Jamal and Getz, 1999), however, the positions offered by the region's tourism sector, while localized, tend to be low-salary and low-status. They are often temporary and seasonal in nature, and even those that are permanent and year-round remain tethered to the seasonal ebbs and flows of the region's primary tourist attraction, the Ski Hill. Workers at the Hotel, for example, retain their positions during the off-season, but their hours may be negatively affected depending upon occupancy. These conditions serve as stumbling blocks to the recruitment and retention of labour, and following from them, the Hotel has had to look elsewhere for labour. Importantly, then, for the Hotel (which requires a staff of approximately 110 workers year-round), the gradual

diversification of the rural regional economy has run parallel to a number of developments: the institutionalization of labour export in the Philippines, the establishment and eventual expansion of the Canadian Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), and the more recent parallel, though not always harmonious, provincial interest in immigration. Filipino migrant workers in Manitoba find themselves at the intersection of these three labour mobility regimes. Each embedded in larger state projects of development, they dictate the terms and conditions of migration, and as such, are intrinsically connected to and affecting of migrant well-being.

That overseas labour migration might benefit local, migrant-sending, economies is a position long held by states and non-governmental organizations. In the case of the Philippines, this outcome has been pursued through a complex institutional lattice work consisting of various government departments and agencies, and a state-regulated private sector (Bello et al., 2005). As a result, the Philippines is one of the world's top exporters of labour in the world (Ball, 2006; Tyner and Donaldson, 1999; Solomon, 2009; Agbola and Acupan, 2010). Predicated on a long history of internal and regional labour mobility (De Jong et al., 1983; Barber and Bryan, 2012), the country—under the Marcos regime—formerly instituted labour export in the early 1970s (Tyner, 1999). Reflected in the 1974 Labour Code, all labour policies, including those related to labour export, were brought in-line with the country's overall development goals. By the early 1980s, the country owed $21 billion dollars in foreign debt, and a set of structural adjustment programs were initiated by the state. Well-rehearsed in the academic and grey literature, rather than realizing its top-down redistributive objectives, structural adjustment would deepen inequality in the country. And as wealth and power became further concentrated in the hands of small elite, social and economic inclusion for a significant portion of the population remained illusory (Baggio, 2008; Rodriguez, 2017). In turn, the Marcos regime intensified labour export as a means of shoring up the Philippine economy. During this early period of labour export, the regime deployed two discursive formulations to justify the state's involvement and intervention in overseas labour migration: the first stressed the inevitability of population movement in light of global disparities; the second, a discourse of sacrifice, suggested that individual Filipinos should submit to this natural phenomenon, sacrificing themselves for the good of the nation and in the service of their families (Tyner, 2009).

The current iteration of migrant subjectivity-producing and -reproducing discourse draws heavily on neoliberal doctrine concerning the inevitability of globalization, the neutrality of capital, and the primacy of the individual (Rodriguez, 2013; Rodriguez and Schwenken, 2013; Ortega, 2016; Polanco, 2017). Following from the ideological parametres of neoliberalism, the state would no longer assume a proactive position regarding migration; rather, it would simply manage what was already happening (Tyner, 2009). From this, a new state interpellation of migration and migrant identity emerged. According to it, "naturally adventurous" Filipinos were simply participating in the "cultural of migration" that had evolved in the Philippines

(Guevarra, 2010). Empowered and independent, the new modern migrant "chooses" migration as a means of self-improvement and upward mobility (Guevarra, 2010; Guevarra, 2014). Migrants are, thus, fully rational agents, responsible for their migration and moreover, the conditions of their labour once abroad. Practically, this absolves government of any responsibility for migrant workers, while enabling the state to download the many of the costs associated with economic development onto its migrant citizens. Though often focused on earning capacity of migrants and their contributions to Gross Domestic Product via remittances (Bove and Elia, 2017), migration as development encompasses a wide range of anticipated practices and outcomes. These include human capital investment, investment in infrastructure (housing and community-based), as well as the transfer of technological and cultural norms (Clemens et al., 2014; Özden and Rapoport, 2018).

If Filipino workers are responsibilized for the conditions of their migration by the Philippine state, they are, following the parameters of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, equally responsibilized by the Canadian state for their well-being once in Canada. Over the last thirty years, a significant body of critical scholarship has emerged in Canada, focused on the exploitative nature of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (Fudge and MacPhail, 2009; Foster, 2012; McLaughlin and Hennerbry, 2013; Goldring and Joly, 2014; Beatson and Hanley, 2017; Horgan and Liinamaa, 2017; Strauss and McGrath, 2017). Drawing on Marx and grounding their analysis in the experiences, claims, and struggles of migrant and immigrant workers, Choudry and Smith offer a useful conceptualization of the condition of temporary foreign labour in the country. Destabilizing one of capitalism's most enduring fallacies, they argue that the myth of "free" labour obscures the extent to which the Canadian economy has long relied on "exploitation through race, immigration status, and shifting forms of 'unfree labour'" (Choudry and Smith, 2016). Revealed in an expansive body of academic and grey literature, the threat of deportation renders migrants extremely vulnerable to range of profit generating and/or accelerating practices (Basok, 1999). Two years after the expansion of the Low Skilled Pilot Project, the Hotel's first Filipino workers were recruited, and by 2014, 71 of the Hotel's 110 employees were migrants, and the majority had arrived through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.

FINDINGS: MIGRANT WELL-BEING IN TRANSITION

As the Filipino state to draw on migrant resources in the service of economic development in the Philippines is contingent upon the production and reproduction of social identities conducive to the labour export, in Manitoba, the province's Nominee Program facilitates the long-term retention of workers through the provision of permanent status in Canada to some temporary foreign workers. For temporary foreign workers in the food sector, however, the pathway to permanency is contingent upon geography, so that depending on where a worker is employed, the Provincial Nominee Program in question may

(or may not) allow for permanent residency. Provincial Nominee Programs (PNPs) have been a feature of Canadian immigration since the late 1990s. Managed through a series of bi-lateral agreements between the provinces and federal government, the PNPs represent a redistribution of jurisdictional responsibility for the development and implementation of immigration policy. These bi-lateral agreements empower provinces to "nominate" individuals who meet their respective PNP criteria. "Nomination" refers to the final step in the PNP application process, whereby, having approved an application, the province "nominates" the applicant for designation to their jurisdiction. That person then completes an application for permanent residency which includes their nomination, submitting it to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)[1]. Final responsibility for selection—effectively approving of the nomination and granting permanent residency status—rests with IRCC, which is the sole authority for the issuance of admission visas in Canada (Carter et al., 2008). As permanency for the Hotel's temporary foreign workers became a possibility and then a reality, their long-term livelihood strategies and projects of social reproduction shifted. In turn, their framing of and goals vis-à-vis family life and the hoped-for wellbeing of kin were re-directed, often in unexpected ways.

Drawing on several examples from in-depth interviews and ethnographic fieldwork in Manitoba and the Philippines, this section traces the shifting parameters of migrant wellbeing as informed by the migration-driven economic development strategies of both the Philippine and Manitoba states. It concludes with a discussion of the material, relational, and affective implications of the permanent residency on offer to TFWs via the MPNP, arguing that while permanency certainly redresses some of the vulnerabilities generated by global labour mobility regimes (sending- and receiving-) for those able to avail of it, thereby enhancing migrants' experiences of wellbeing, it simultaneously reinforces those vulnerabilities for those who cannot, while obscuring the precarity and exploitation characteristic of international labour recruitment. For many of the Hotel's earliest migrant workers (those recruited in 2009, 2010, and 2011), the potential of permanent residency status was relatively unknown prior to arrival. For example, Ester, who was one of the first two workers to arrive in 2009, expected to work the duration of her 2 year contract; if she was fortunate, she explained in 2012, it would be renewed for another 2 years. In other words, when she arrived, she planned to stay for 2 years, but hoped she would be able to remain in the province for four, after which—and in line with the TFWP's four-in four-out rule[2]—she would look for work elsewhere, likely in Dubai where she had been prior to Manitoba. Regardless of where she ended up, Ester only anticipated contract work and she only expected to remain for a few years. Her family would

remain in the Philippines, and she would continue to care for them, but always from a significant distance. Her life, as she imagined it, would be characterized by a permanent impermanence and by a separation from family and other significant relations she had grown to accept, if not completely tolerate. That said, as she explained, even as she knew she would have to leave Canada, she was very hopeful that she might find a way to stay. This sentiment was common amongst the first cohort of migrants at the Hotel. As Peter, who arrived early in 2010 explained, "even as we know we have to leave, many Filipinos would like to stay if they can." Fortunately, several weeks into her position at the Hotel, management informed Ester that after a six-month period, she would be eligible to apply, with their support, for permanent residency status through the Manitoba Nominee Program. This possibility, previously unknown, dramatically altered Ester's plans, as well as the short- and long-term direction of her life.

When I first met Ester, she was on maternity leave. Her application with the MPNP successful, she was waiting to hear back with confirmation regarding her permanent residency status. She expressed hope about the future and was eagerly waiting for her husband to join her. As we spoke, she opened her mail; her son's Social Insurance Number amongst it, she congratulated the 9-month old as he tentatively made his way around the living room of the small house Ester rented from the Hotel. *What does this mean for you?* I asked, *for your family in the Philippines and your life moving forward?*

"For so many years, I planned to work abroad. I studied Hotel Management at college so I could find a job. First, I was in Dubair, and then I came to Canada. Of course, I wanted My husband is a nurse. He works in rural areas in our province. We want very much to have a big family, but it is hard to imagine doing that if I am here and he is there. Of course, I hoped we would someday live together, but when, we didn't know… maybe (laughing) when I retire…

We are still waiting for my PR card and then from their [my husband] will be able to be with us…We will continue to support my parents and my husband's parents from here, but we will be together, us and [the baby], and that will make things easier; less lonely." (Interview, Manitoba, December 2012) My husband sees the baby on Skype and he was online for the birth. He has missed a lot. He wants to be here.

As with Ester, for the majority migrant workers at the Hotel, arrival in Manitoba followed a protracted trajectory, both personal and familial, of short-term, circular labour migration. Rooted in the Philippine's history of labour export, most had already worked abroad and nearly everyone had immediate family who had done the same. Violet who arrived early in 2012 explains:

"My mother worked in Hong Kong for a family with two little girls for almost twenty years. We saw her every 3 years, maybe two. My dad doesn't work very well; maybe, a small job here and there, but not enough for me and my siblings…I decided to pursue HRM (hotel and restaurant management) in college. I knew that if I did that I could probably work abroad. At first, though, when my mom retired, I found work as a welder in Korea, and then I was hired by the Hotel and came to Canada. Living away from them is hard; I especially miss my youngest brother, but it is what we Filipinos do. I am paying for his school now…" (Interview, Manitoba, December 2012)

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[1]During the period corresponding to fieldwork, IRCC was called Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

[2]"Four-in four-out" refers to a cumulative-duration rule under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. The rule specified that temporary foreign workers deemed low-skilled could remain in Canada for a maximum of 4 years, after which they had to remain outside of Canada for four-years prior to re-applying for employment in the country. The rule was taken off the books in 2016.

Violet's Mother Offers Additional Detail. "There was no work for me when my children were small. I found a job with a family in Hong Kong. They (my employers) were good people. I went back to the Philippines every 2 years, but it they said they needed me, maybe three. They had two little girls. I worked from them for 16 years, from the time Violet was little until the time she finished college. She is smart. I wanted her to go to school, [but] I didn't want her to work abroad. But I was tired from working and I wanted to be in the Philippines as I got older. She was the only one of her siblings able to go, so she went. She takes care of her brothers now, and she sends money for the house. It is what we do for our families even if it means we are not with them." (Interview, Cebu, March 2013)

Long exposed to the realities of overseas employment, for many at the Hotel, like Violet, separation from family and other important relations had become a near ubiquitous feature of life. "It is hard. People here (in Manitoba) always says they feel sad for us Filipinos, and it's not that it's not hard, but I am used to it. My mom worked away for most of my life; I could not think of a life where my family would be in one place" (Violet, interview, Manitoba, December 2012). Her mother's presence only punctuating her childhood, adolescence, and early adult life, Violet had long lived with the material and emotional realities of temporary legal status. It was not what she wanted for herself, but in light of her family's economic need, she felt it necessary. To that end she applied for positions in Canada and New Zealand: "I took the job in Manitoba because they said that I might be able to become a permanent Canadian resident; I knew I would live away from my family, but at least there would be some stability for me, and then because of that, for them."

Emma applied for a position at the Hotel at the suggestion of a friend and former co-worker who had successfully secured work there. Older than both Ester and Violet, her decision was somewhat differently configured. Sitting with her husband at a small restaurant in Douglas she described to me how she had been very motivated to remain in the Philippines while her children were young. She worked long hours as a front-desk manager at a hotel, but she was able to spend her evenings and Sundays with them. When her youngest was 13 and her eldest nearly 16, she applied to the Hotel in Douglas. Successful in her application, she landed as a temporary foreign worker in 2010. Emma's transition to permanent residency made possible a range of opportunities for herself, her husband, and her children. Once her nomination from the province was secured, her husband arrived on an open-work permit. Approximately 18 months later, with their permanent residency status confirmed, they returned to the Philippines to pick up their children.

While initially the plan had been to spend the remainder of her working-life abroad and likely separated from her family to meet their growing financial needs (corresponding largely to funding post-secondary education), Emma's new status as a permanent resident altered that. "I was nervous, very nervous" she explained, "to be away from them. They [weren't] children anymore, but we are so close; the decision was hard. The reality of not being close to them, even [harder]. . .I cried a lot during the first year because I thought: 'this is life now'. I thought about the future and it wasn't with them." (Interview, Manitoba, December 2012) Things

improved somewhat when her husband arrived; they were able to look forward together and they knew it would only be a matter of time before their children could join them. In the Philippines, Emma's son and daughter redirected their short- and long-term plans toward Manitoba. Her son—the eldest of the two—took a bartending course to improve the likelihood of finding work with the Hotel. Her daughter, in turn, planned to enroll in grade 12 and while completing her high school education, to work as a banquet server, again at the Hotel. We first met in the Philippines as they were about to leave for Canada. Despite some worry about leaving friends and other close family behind, they spoke with excitement about their new lives in Manitoba and more importantly, about living with their parents again after 3 years apart.

In the barangay where Violet's parents and brothers live, most of the neighbours are relatives, and each family unit has multiple members who work and send money from abroad. Similarly, within the social and familial networks of Emma and Ester, there are long-standing and persistent patterns of migration. These patterns correspond to those described in the academic and grey literature on Filipino labour migration over the last five decades. And yet despite, a considerable amount of permanent relocation amongst Filipinos more broadly[3], with very rare exception relative to others in the social and familial groups, Violet, Emma, and Ester are alone to transition to a legal status in the site of employment that grants them access to more than the most basic social rights and entitlements. In this way, even as other challenges persist, their lives, overall wellbeing, and mental and physical health, are less determined by the exploitative potential and conditions attending short-term and circular forms of labour migration.

At the same time, permanency altered or solidified family dynamics and would determine or circumscribe the future mobility of members. Once permanent, Violet, for example, asked her brother to remain in the Philippines. Despite his interest in overseas employment, Violet's long-standing support of the family positioned her as the primary decision maker where the care of their parents was concerned. She would continue to provide for them materially, but her brother would remain in the Philippines to oversee their care. Amongst the migrant workers at the Hotel it was relatively common that their mobility would engender a relative's immobility. Equally common, however, the permanency of the Hotel's once temporary migrant workers fostered new and previously unanticipated form of mobility for family. Beyond children and spouses, the Hotel's migrant workers facilitated the arrival of cousins, aunts, uncles, and siblings, often leveraging their loyalty to their employer to secure their relative's employment at the Hotel. Hiring and eventually supporting the MPNP applications of their worker's relatives became a key labour recruitment and retention strategy for the Hotel. Once permanent, migrant workers are no longer obliged to remain with the employer who hired them through the TFWP. Offering employment and eventual residency to the family members of previously temporary migrants deters workers from resigning and represents not only a means of recruiting but also, retaining workers. For rural Manitoba's fledgling service and hospitality sector, then, issues related to both labour and population (both of

which are required by the rural economy more broadly) are resolved.

DISCUSSION: MIGRANT WELLBEING AS SITE OF ACCUMULATION IN RURAL MANITOBA

As revealed in the vignettes offered in the previous section, while the migrants at the centre of this discussion abide by the norms of "transnational Filipino family", they simultaneously and actively seek out alternatives. For the migrants at the centre of this analysis, the desire for a family-life "in place" prompted a unique relationship with their employer who draws on the networks of its Filipino workforce in the recruitment and retention of labour. The Hotel represents a particularly unique case in so far as their intentions and actions vis-à-vis its migrant workforce are self-interested and, concurrently, motivated by care for their employees. Consistently in conversation and in more formal interviews with the author, Hotel management reflected on the life-altering nature of permanency for their otherwise, chronically temporary, migrant workers. Here, management displayed an acute understanding of the hardships of labour migration. The transition to permanency was, in other words, seen as a win-win. Where the workers remained with the hotel, which was the expectation, the Hotel was able to attract, recruit, and retain a more permanent workforce. In turn, those who had arrived to work on a temporary basis—their short- and long-term livelihood strategies once bound to the turbulent dictates of global labour import and export regimes, were able to settle permanently and reunite with friends and family. This, it was regarded correctly by Hotel management as significantly and positively impacting the wellbeing, both mental and physical, of their migrant workforce.

In these ways, migrant wellbeing is tethered to the systems that produce labour mobility and to the social, economic, and ideological structures in both the sending- and receiving states that determine the conditions under which that mobility is realized and experienced. Migrants' are simultaneously subject, then, to the potentially exploitative practices of employers that generate mental and physical ill-health; the parameters of receiving-state policy managing migration that separates them from kin and limits their ability to access appropriate and often necessary health care; and to the social and economic inequalities that initiated their mobility in the first place. Restricting viable local employment opportunities, these inequalities are mobilized by sending-states in their efforts to bolster economic development through labour export. While simultaneously, they are capitalized on by receiving-states and employers as they seek to secure profitable forms of labour. Importantly, for the migrants at the Hotel in Manitoba, some of this is tempered by the transition to permanency. Being permanent means less dependency on their employer and therefore a greater capacity to contest problematic work dynamics and conditions. It also means a greater ability to access health care services albeit it, in the context of rural Manitoba, these may not meet all of their needs—particularly around mental health. Permanency also

offers the opportunity to be reunited with family, and in this way, it redresses the loneliness, worry, and emotional toll that can accompany labour migration. Sheila who arrived in 2012 describes the resolution of this set of feelings:

You remember [Catherine] when we first met (December 2012) and I had just arrived? We had coffee in the restaurant. I was so worried for my children. Proud of myself for taking care of them and their school, but so scared all the time that something might happen to them, especially the youngest, while I'm here. . .Since they arrived in Manitoba (spring 2014), there are new challenges, but at least they are here. I don't have to worry about them in the same way I did before. [Laughing] I sleep much better. (Interview in Douglas, June 2014)

Sheila had arrived 3 months before our initial meeting. Although she belonged to an extensive transnational family network, with relatives across the United States, she had never lived or worked abroad. Prompted by a desire to pay eldest child's university fees and to be more independent, Sheila was—when we first met—just settling into the routine feelings of separation. She was motivated to work and to send money home, but the evenings were difficult and the nights—often spent talking online line or texting with her children and husband—were long. Migrant workers in Douglas, as elsewhere, mitigated the emotional and practice difficulties associated with separation from family through provisioning work and near-constant contact through communication technology. While mostly effective, these practices were only ever partial, and coupled with the 12 h time differences, most continued to described feeling very far from loved ones. Over the course of this study, however, those feelings and the practical challenges of connection dissipated for most as family arrived.

Despite some criticism of the PNPs broadly (Dobrowolsky, 2011; Dobrowolsky, 2013; Dobrowolsky et al., 2015; Bryan, 2019a), the Manitoba program is typically held in high regard. In large measure, researchers of migration, policy makers (in the province as elsewhere in Canada), and immigrants themselves regard the MPNP as a success. Within the first ten years, it more than doubled Manitoba's share of immigration, from 2% to 4.6% of landings. Moreover, the program has effectively attracted newcomers to rural areas, accounting for regional growth in housing sales and boosts in local business. Prioritizing these outcomes, the narrative offered by the province stresses the positive economic impact of permanent population growth (CBC, 2018; Goertzen, 2019; Government of Manitoba, 2020). Here, "nominees" (the informal label attached to immigrants who arrive through the Program) are the new workers, new consumers, and new tax base of the regional rural economy. They bolster local labour markets, contribute to local industry, and participate in local social institutions. In Douglas, such contributions to rural regional development are seen across a range of sites and sectors, as well as in the development of a small retail sector that offers Filipino products and money transfer services. At the Hotel, the question of labour is largely resolved, while a new Filipino customer-base (comprised of staff and their families) has emerged. At the same time, adjacent employment sectors in service and hospitality, as well as in agriculture and construction have been able to hire these new residents, their children, and their recently arrived spouses.

Often overlooked is that the dual labour/citizen subject required of rural economic development is often claimed from the inward flow of *temporary* workers to province. Corresponding to the study period, TFWs working in Manitoba frequently transitioned to permanent residency through the provisions of the MPNP, which allowed those with a full-time, permanent job offer to become permanent residents. As a result, many rural employers—including the Hotel—came to rely on the Program to recruit and retain their migrant workers. Largely absent from political discourse and the campaigns of regional economic development offices vis-à-vis immigration is acknowledgement of the initial conditions, restrictions, and forms of exploitation experienced by many rural nominees. The depth of this omission becomes all the more significant when read against the history of labour export in the Philippines and the reasons why Filipino workers seek out temporary overseas employment in the first place. Citing saturated labour markets, low wages, ineffectual government, social insecurity, and the near-constant threat of environmental disaster as motivating their migration, those at the Hotel offer good reason to seek out overseas employment. Through their labour migration, education is supported; the necessities of life are provided for; livelihood projects are sustained; concrete houses are built—survival is ensured, and life is safe-guarded. Thus, the profound connection between employment in Canada and survival in the Philippines deepens the dependency created by the Temporary Foreign Worker program, heightening the consequences of impermanence and importantly, making the possibility permanent residency all the more salient. Obscured, then, are not only the exploitative conditions present in Manitoba, but the extent to which the rural development in the province relies on and reproduces the profound social and economic inequalities upon which the global political economy of circular, guest, and temporary forms of labour migration are founded.

CONCLUSION

Forty years after the neoliberalization of Canadian agriculture, tourism is a central, if somewhat tenuous, feature of rural Manitoba's economy. The Douglas Hotel is the sector's largest employer, but importantly, most of its workforce are not "local" in the conventional sense; rather, nearly three-quarters are migrants. In a very real way, then, and as elaborated above, the local success of the region's tourism sector is predicated on processes initiated and enacted not only within Manitoba, but within a broader global political economy connecting the province and the Hotel to the Philippines. The wellness of this cohort of migrants, then, was produced, reproduced, and re-directed at the intersection of multiple state development projects, and largely informed by the ways in which employers mediate these projects through their recruitment and retention practices. And yet, their arrival and eventual settlement in Manitoba offers a tenuous alternative to much of the scholarship on temporary labour migration globally, and more

specifically in Canada. In this literature, the conditions promoted by guest worker programs are routinely and necessarily rehearsed (Fudge and MacPhail, 2009; Nakache and Kinoshita, 2010; Sharma, 2012; Binford, 2013; Strauss and McGrath, 2017; Weiler et al., 2017). Often prioritized in this critique is the extent to which the value of temporary migrant workers is tied to their exclusion from social, economic, and political life within the host country. The Canadian example, however, offers a series of potential counterpoints to this narrative, following largely from the potential of permanent residency offered by a growing number of sub-nationally developed and implemented immigration schemes, referred to as Provincial Nominee Programs (Morrish, 2004; Carter et al., 2008). Indeed, where permanency is possible and supported, the exploitative tendencies of the Temporary Foreign Worker program are effectively undercut. Workers are no longer dependent on their employers, nor are they vulnerable to the threat of deportation. The transition to permanent residency also brings opportunity for family reunification, and for a life (often highly sought after) lived more in place (Bryan 2019a).

For those at the centre of this analysis, wellbeing—as a subjectively experienced and understood state—had been long informed by the centrality of international labour mobility to economic development in the Philippines. Indeed, like for so many globally as illustrated in a rich and in-depth literature, all of the migrants interviewed had long-standing experience with migration and had long relied on overseas employment to meet their families' social reproductive needs. Once in Canada, these familial projects of livelihood and reproduction became dependent on the opportunities available there. Initially, this meant employment: temporary, short-term, and infused with the precarity and vulnerabilities of guest labour programs more generally. Eventually, however, it meant permanent residency—an outcome made possible by Manitoba's provincial immigration scheme. In Manitoba—as revealed in local news media coverage and in conversation with Hotel management—local employers are quick to highlight the benefits of permanency, focusing primarily on family reunification, migrant access to health care and other state-provided services, and the localization of migrant spending. All of which, in turn, yield tangible economic benefits. Here, the logic goes that through family reunification, remittance sending decreases as migrants turn their attention to establishing themselves and their children in Manitoba. Moreover, workers experience less stress, have better health outcomes, and as such, are able to be more productive. Absent from this discourse, however, is recognition of permanency as a remedy to the exploitation normalized by the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and of the ways in which the TFWP's exploitative potential comes to be realized through the practices of employers.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this article are not available because they are restricted to use by the author through the Research Ethics Approval process.

ETHICS STATEMENT

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Migrant and Refugee Impact on Well-Being in Rural Areas: Reframing Rural Development Challenges in Greece

Apostolos G. Papadopoulos [1,2]* and Loukia-Maria Fratsea [2]

[1]National Centre for Social Research, Athens, Greece, [2]Harokopio University, Kallithea, Greece

The paper aims to exemplify and discuss the changing conditions and challenges posed by the newly arriving populations of migrants and refugees in rural Greece, along with local people's views on the impact of the new arrivals in their rural places. Its main objective is to understand whether migrants and refugees create threats or opportunities for the local population, and whether movers and non-movers have a shared understanding of well-being in their rural areas. The analysis unveils the connections that are emerging between migrants and refugees and the economy, society and culture in rural receiving areas. Thus, the paper aims at showing the complexity of rural migrant flows and how the interactions between migrants, refugees and locals in the light of the well-being of rural areas may inform rural development in Greece. The paper is structured into five main sections following the introduction. The first section contains a discussion of the main concepts used as building blocks for creating a theoretical framing of well-being in rural areas. The second section develops a brief discussion of international and internal migration to rural areas in Greece, as well as providing some contextual information on the impact of the economic crisis and new developments in response to the recession. The third section includes a short presentation of the methodological approach and a description of the case study area. The fourth section is dedicated to an analysis of the narratives of international migrants, refugees, internal migrants, locals and stakeholders. Finally, the concluding section critically discusses the conceptualisations of rurality and well-being between the various population groups and articulates the challenges connected to well-being and mobilities in contemporary rural Greece.

Keywords: migrants, refugees, subjective well-being, mobilities, migrant aspirations, rural Greece

INTRODUCTION

It is argued that while economic migrants move between countries, and therefore places, in search of employment and/or a better way of life, refugees are forced to move away from their homes and end up in places where they have to settle and start their lives over. For a time, at least, after their initial movement(s), the two groups share a common objective: securing their living in a foreign place by adapting to the new setting(s) and pursuing a good life. In the relevant literature, migrating populations have another function in receiving countries and places: that of agents of social change (Castles 2004; O'Reilly 2012; Castles 2018); which is now widely recognised. The literature also notes

that some moving populations, including potential movers, have a considerable degree of choice over where they move to (Bakewell, 2010), with the migration networks playing a facilitating role in this process (De Haas, 2010).

In such a context, migration is entangled with economic and social inequalities between sending and receiving countries, regions and places (Black et al., 2005). Moreover, permanent, temporary and circular movements of migrating populations are part and parcel of different and/or overlapping socio-spatial mobility patterns associated with movers. The socio-spatial characteristics of migrating populations need to be related to the scale and impact of migration. In this connection, the spatial perspective is important for analysing how and to what extent migrant and refugee impact on their places of settlement (Miller and Ponto, 2016). In an era of mobilities and identity politics, it is important to recognise the positioning of migrants and refugees in specific places and spaces (Zizek, 2016; Fukuyama, 2019). Their presence and settlement are negotiated at various spatial scales, while, at the same time, individual and subjective understandings are gaining ground in the discussions about the societal and democratic responses and moral obligations towards these populations.

In response to the common view of migrants and refugees as representing an external factor in local and rural places, we are now looking at both types of movers as populations who carry with them their imagined destinations and territorial imaginaries, which constitute important components of their mobility impetus. The "new mobility paradigm" (Hannam et al., 2006; Urry, 2007), to be discussed more extensively in the theoretical section, stresses the need to think of and analyse migration through the lens of movement, without neglecting sedentarism and anchored movements. Moreover, mobilities are complex assemblages of movements, social imaginaries and experiences (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013; Salazar 2017). Analysing the mobilities puts us in a position to conceive and theorise the de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation processes in people's lives.

In addition, migration is considered the complex result of an interplay between individual aspirations and contextual opportunities. Recent evidence suggests that aspirations are an important prerequisite for migration, but they are also reframed as a consequence of migration (Czaika and Vothknecht 2014; de Haas et al. 2019; Migali and Scipioni 2019). In many cases, migrants have much higher aspirations than non-migrants prior to migration, but also aspirations which are built up as a result of their migration experiences themselves (see also Creighton 2013; Carling and Collins 2018). Based on aspirations, the human well-being approach to migrants underlines the differences between subjective and objective well-being, emphasising the former (Wright, 2011).

From a rural perspective, there is a highly relevant discussion centered on those who move from urban to rural areas in search of a better—compared to the urban—way of life, aspiring to a "return to the land," an "improvement of their well-being," and/or a "rural idyll" (Halfacree, 2007). Terms such as "lifestyle migration" (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009) or "amenity

migration" (Gosnell and Abrams, 2009) were coined to explain those who move to areas with rich natural resources and favourable climatic conditions, as well as to areas perceived as offering a better quality of life (Cadieux and Hurley, 2011; Matarrita-Cascante, 2017). Recent research has highlighted the interaction between migrants (as newcomers) and rural places as important aspect of rural well-being (Gieling et al., 2017; Gieling et al., 2019). The relatively new term "rural cosmopolitanism" precisely captures how cosmopolitan dispositions and practices are connected to attributes of individuals and places in rural society (Cid Aguayo, 2008; Popke, 2011; Woods, 2018).

The paper aims to exemplify and discuss the changing conditions and challenges posed by the newly arriving populations of migrants and refugees in rural Greece, along with local people's views on the impact of the new arrivals in their rural places. Its main objective is to understand whether migrants and refugees create threats or opportunities for the local population, and whether movers and non-movers have a shared understanding of well-being in their rural areas. The analysis unveils the connections that are emerging between migrants and refugees and the economy, society and culture in rural receiving areas. Thus, the paper aims at showing the complexity of rural migrant flows and how the interactions between migrants, refugees and locals in the light of the well-being of rural areas may inform rural development in Greece. Moreover, in the empirical analysis, we discern two notions of well-being: first, the "*well-being of rural areas*," which relates to the general understanding of the qualities of living, working and/or residing in particular rural places, and second, "*well-being in rural areas*," which refers to specific experiences of how migrants, refugees and/or locals describe their life qualities and their everyday practices in relation to local/rural well-being. In this context, the general understanding of the well-being of rural areas is juxtaposed against the specific conditions of personal well-being. A brief discussion of concepts such as mobilities, aspirations, subjective well-being, lifestyle and cosmopolitanism will be used to create a new theoretical context for reframing rural development challenges in Greece.

The paper is structured into five main sections: The first section contains a discussion of the main concepts used as building blocks for creating a theoretical framing of well-being in rural areas. The second section develops a brief discussion of international and internal migration to rural areas in Greece, as well as providing some contextual information on the impact of the economic crisis and new developments in response to the recession. The third section includes a short presentation of the methodological approach and a description of the case study area. The fourth section, based on empirical data collected in the period 2017–2020, is dedicated to the analysis of international migrants, refugees, internal migrants, locals and stakeholders' perceptions and understandings of the well-being of rural areas and their own well-being as (permanent or non-permanent) residents in rural areas. The concluding section discusses the need for reframing rural development and articulates the main

challenges connected to migration-and-development dynamics in rural Greece.

THEORETICAL FRAMING FOR UNDERSTANDING MIGRANT WELL-BEING IN RURAL AREAS

The theoretical discussion in this paper draws on various disciplines: sociology, geography and their sub-disciplines, in the main, but also diverse research areas that seem to be converging in recent years. For example, it is now well-documented that internal and international migration should be seen as closely interconnected, both because they should be approached as different stages in migration processes, and to illustrate the many similarities in terms of concepts, mechanisms and trajectories in the two migration categories (Skeldon, 2006; King and Skeldon, 2010; de Haas et al., 2020). Moreover, the development effects of migration are discernible, when analysing the structural and functional aspects of migration, in the countries/regions/places of both origin and destination.

Some 20 years ago, Nyberg-Sørensen et al. (2002) were commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to study the existing and potential links between migration and development. The authors suggest that the positive dimensions and possibilities of the migration-development nexus should be taken into consideration, highlighting "[T]he links between migration, development, and conflict from the premise that to align policies on migration and development, migrant and refugee diasporas must be acknowledged as a development resource" (2002: 50). Such work had a great impact on related discussions, as well as coining the term "nexus" to illustrate the complex interlinkages between migration and development (Bastia and Skeldon, 2020). For example, Bastia (2018: 315), in her summing up of relevant attempts, refers to three phases of the migration-development nexus (which she also labels "optimist," "pessimist" and "neo-optimist") as follows: 1) during the 1950s and 1960s, when the focus was on remittances and return migration, and more specifically on filling labour gaps in the North; 2) during the 1970s and 1980s, when the focus was on underdevelopment and migration, with poverty and the brain drain as key themes; and 3) during the post-1990s period, when migration and co-development were stressed, transnational circulation celebrated, and temporary along with circular migration seen as the ideal.

The key question about who benefits from migration attached to the discussions on the "migration-development-nexus" cannot be answered on the basis of linear thinking (King and Collyer, 2016). In fact, there are various interpretations of this nexus, depending on an analysis of complex interdependencies, and on the two-way causality that may have paradoxical effects (King, 2018; Bastia and Skeldon, 2020). The dominant view, according to which migration is seen as a "tool," which needs to be "properly" used to spread and/or promote development effects, depicts migration as a phenomenon collateral to development, as well as something that remains disembedded from the economic system. In this connection, it is considered of the utmost importance to get to grips with the social transformations along with the socioeconomic and political realities linked to migration (Castles, 2018; de Haas et al., 2020), but also to shift the discussion to the middle ground between migration and development as co-constitutive aspects of social reality (Raghuram, 2009; de Haas, 2020; Raghuram, 2020).

The human well-being approach offers interesting insights since it focuses on how well-being is constructed in specific places, the way(s) these constructions change during the migration process, and how well-being "travels" across spatial boundaries (Wright, 2012). This approach views migration as a strategy for exiting poverty and achieving well-being, reproducing many of the arguments underpinning the "migration-development-nexus," but also considering both the positive and negative linkages between the two ends of the equation (Wright, 2011). However, the emphasis is on subjective well-being, along with life satisfaction and quality of life as these are perceived by migrants, while subjective well-being is de-aggregated into two components: the affective and the cognitive. Subjective well-being is built upon social comparisons (i.e. how migrants position themselves in relation to others) and needs that include everything needed to "live well," while living well varies over time and people's life course (Wright, 2012).

Additionally, the human well-being approach has important points of connection with the capabilities approach (Appadurai, 2004; Sen, 2007); but it remains plural and multiple. The capabilities approach underlines aspirations as an asset for migrants, but also cautions us that migration experience feeds back into and reinforces individual aspirations. However, aspirations and psychological characteristics are theorized primarily on an individual and/or intersubjective basis, while there have also been attempts to move towards relational well-being and retain the community or local level for conceptualizing migrant well-being (White, 2017). All in all, the subjective well-being approach is well connected to the discussion on migration and development in view of the "migration-development-nexus" and underlines the need to explore the nuts and bolts of such a nexus by exploring the complexity of related processes.

Such nexus is constructed locally, and it is thus important to remember that places are distinct mixtures of wider and more local social relations (Massey, 1991). Places should be understood with reference to peoples' mobilities. It is important to think of places as nodes of social relations, which are continuously in the process of being reconstructed and negotiated in space. In Massey's (Massey, 2005: 151) words we need to keep in mind the "throwntogetherness of places," referring to the "even-shifting constellation of trajectories." Places are negotiated by identities that are on the move, while there is multiplicity, antagonisms and contrasting temporalities. Places are practised by both movers and residents, and there is ongoing negotiation between intersecting trajectories. This produces a relational understanding of space which enables rural places to reconstitute, negotiate and hybridize (Woods 2007; Healey and Jones 2012).

In a similar vein, a long discussion on the population turnaround of rural areas, described as "counter-urbanisation,"

depicts the diverse factors surrounding rural population growth and net migration to the detriment of larger urban centres; "counter-urbanization" remains a complex phenomenon challenged by various disagreements over its exact definition, rate and scope (Champion, 1998; Halfacree and Boyle, 1998; Mitchell, 2004). Due to rural migration, new social groups are emerging in rural areas, which are identified with diverse social and economic practices and engaged with innovative and/or hybrid activities, and whose lifestyles differ significantly from that of local people (Stockdale, 2006; Mahon, 2007; Stockdale, 2014a). Despite the complexity and indeterminacy of the term, the factors connected to counter-urbanisation are open to multiple interpretations, allowing for the rethinking of the facts behind the phenomenon (Argent, 2019). For example, counter-urbanisation may be the result of movements by former city dwellers who develop a genuine attachment to a rural place (or pro-rural counter-urbanisation see Halfacree and Rivera, 2012), or by urban dwellers who were driven away from the city by unemployment, the economic recession and so on. But there are also cases where there is multi-local living that primarily relates to better off socioeconomic groups. It is suggested that more targeted research is required to (re)connect mobilities, lifestyles and life-courses in rural areas (Argent, 2019: 762). Recent research has de-emphasized counter-urbanization as a comprehensive trend and sheds more light on the (inter) subjective and agency aspects of movements to/across rural areas (Stockdale, 2014b; Scott et al., 2017).

According to a recent review, "counter-urbanization" (Halfacree, 2012), "amenity migration" (Gosnell and Abrams, 2009), and "lifestyle migration" (Benson, 2010) are seen as analytical tools which ask and provide answers to different questions (Benson and O'Reilly, 2016: 23). Thus, whereas amenity migration and counter-urbanisation emerge out of geography and demography and focus on place and quantitative analysis, lifestyle migration leans towards qualitative analysis while also focusing on people and the identity-making projections of migrants. Lifestyle migration emerged two decades ago to theorize migration phenomena that could not be explained in terms of an economic rationale (O'Reilly, 2000). The basic idea behind lifestyle migration is that migrants create a narrative through which they render their lives meaningful (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). Lifestyle migration is therefore a complex and nuanced phenomenon that varies from one migrant to another and from one location to the next, while the category as a whole is difficult to operationalize (Benson and O'Reilly, 2016). Lifestyle looms large in this more recent discussion, playing an expanded role not only in terms of the style of life a migrant imagines in the new destination, but also in shaping the way of life actually lived after migration (Benson and Osbaldiston, 2014). Lifestyle migration has therefore developed an argumentation to suggest an upgraded role for lifestyle in migration (Benson and Osbaldiston, 2016; Benson and O'Reilly, 2016); the migrating imaginaries of a better life being the focus of the emphasis on lifestyle (Salazar, 2014).

This discussion of counter-urbanisation and lifestyle migration reflects both an understanding of changing rural space which articulates both structural and agency characteristics embodied in rural places (Halfacree, 2006; Woods, 2009), and a more individualistic understanding of rural space that focuses on personal attributes such as citizenship, emotions, everyday life and othering (Paniagua, 2016). Both lines of thought continue to contribute to the analysis of objective and subjective well-being in rural areas. However, it is important to keep in mind that migration and mobilities are core constituents of rural places (Halfacree, 2012).

The existence of various social actors in rural areas is tightly bound up with transformative mobilities--referring to a mixture of the numerous mobilities towards and among rural areas—which can be traced across rural and urban space (Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2020). The concept of mobility transcends the rural/urban dichotomy, since the rural is acknowledged as at least as mobile as the urban (Milbourne and Kitchen 2014). Along with mobilities which are central to the structuring of people's lives, emphasis is also placed on (im) mobility, moorings, dwelling and stillness as well as on speed or liquidity (Bauman, 2007; Urry, 2007). The core contribution of the mobilities paradigm is that it focuses on the dynamics of movements without forgetting how peoples' imaginaries and experiences anchor them to places (Faist, 2013; Sheller, 2014). Moreover, looking at mobility and immobility (sedentarism) on an equal basis as interconnected facets of social transformation (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013), permits immobility to be better explained and seen in conjunction with mobility (Schewel, 2019).

All in all, belonging emerges as a central notion in the discussion on migration/mobility and the construction of places. The sense of belonging includes two interconnected dimensions: "place-belongingness," which refers to belonging as a personal, intimate feeling of being "at home," and the "politics of belonging," which refers to belonging in terms of claims and an official understanding of membership (Antonsich, 2010: 645). Therefore, place/regional attachment remains an important aspect of belonging in the current era (Antonsich and Holland, 2014). Countering the numerous attempts to relativise the "sense of belonging" and open up the boundaries of places to include migrants, strangers and cosmopolitans, defensive attempts have also been made to safeguard the integrity of the local, to praise parochialism, and stress the insideness of places (Tomaney, 2012; Tomaney, 2015). In the relevant literature, it is argued that the cosmopolitan-local divide is transformed into a cosmopolitan-local continuum, whereby various forms of attachment to local/national protectionism are identified (Roudometof, 2005; Olofsson and Ohman, 2007; Haller and Roudometof, 2010). This has given rise to novel understandings of citizenship and responsibility as these are promoted by cosmopolitanism in contradistinction from older understandings attached to localism/parochialism.

To sum up, own position is that rootedness (localness) and cosmopolitanism need to be reconciled and seen as co-producing aspects of places (Beck, 2002; Calhoun, 2002; Calhoun, 2008; Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013). It is, thus, important to analyse the specific constellations of cosmopolitan/local attributes as these reflect on specific communities, places and regions. Place attachment relates to the well-being of both movers' and non-movers', and in fact enriches rural places (Berg, 2020). Both the

TABLE 1 | Interviews conducted in Western Greece.

Population group	Male	Female
Stakeholder/key informants	9	2
Local population	8	5
Syrian refugees	10	5
Romanian migrants	5	8
Internal migrants	1	6
Total	33	26

Source: Fieldwork 2017–2020.

reality and experiences of migrants and refugees, along with those of internal migrants (in counterurbanization and lifestyle migration terms), remain essential for co-constructing rural places and re-territorializing movers' lives; both have an immense impact on rural development.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND THE REGION OF WESTERN GREECE

This paper draws upon research implemented in the context of the IMAJINE project. Our research focuses on the multiple mobilities and their interconnections with actual and perceived social and spatial inequalities that are traced in both urban (the Attica Region and more particularly Athens) and rural areas in Greece (the Region of Western Greece). Between 2017 and 2020, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with various (non)mover groups such as Romanian migrants, Syrian refugees, internal migrants into Western Greece and the local population. In addition, ethnographic observation in both research areas, interviews with stakeholders and key informants (i.e., policymakers, NGO representatives, farmers, and local authorities) at the national and local level, were used to triangulate information provided by the interviews. In total, 90 interviews were conducted over the two research areas, 59 of which were conducted in Western Greece (see **Table 1**). We acknowledge that the narratives of the interviewees are important sources of information and of emerging interpretation frames which are evaluated and (re)interpreted by the researchers. In this context, we take these narratives as respondents' "truth claims," but we have also tried to juxtapose these various truth claims and triangulate with information collected from other sources to illustrate the underlying processes.

In our opinion, it is important to hold a critical realist stance when dealing with different data sources, while also reveal our reasoning (Given, 2008: 226–230; Bakewell, 2010; Iosifides, 2012). The qualitative research design allowed us to glimpse respondents' understanding and actions and, in addition, to assemble these glimpses to make sense of diversity, convergence and/or divergence in relation to well-being. In this way, the various actors interact within a common socioeconomic setting, contributing significantly to the (re)construction of the specific places and attach meaning to shared notions and aspirations motivating their practices. The rich empirical material offers elements of subjective and shared understandings of well-being and therefore enabled

our informed interpretation of migrant and refugee impact on rural well-being.

The Region of Western Greece has been the focus of our research for over a decade. Our long-term presence in the area has been important in allowing us to monitor and critically evaluate socioeconomic developments alongside wider policy and economic developments at the national level. But entering and accessing the research field is crucial in any research, and particularly when participants belong to vulnerable groups such as migrants and refugees (Neuman, 2014). Although we were "outsiders" or "strangers" asking "strange" questions (Neal and Walters, 2006), our familiarity with the wider area and the fact that our research team combined a range of personal characteristics in terms of gender, languages spoken, age group and rural/urban background[1] helped create an environment of trust and build rapport with the participants. It is argued that this kind of collaborative model combines the advantages of insiders' ease of access with the outsiders' fresh perspective, particularly when conducting multi-sited research involving multiple languages (Fitzgerald, 2006).

In more detail, the population groups were located through migrant and civil society organizations, personal contacts, and snowball sampling. Care was taken to include participants who combined different social and demographic profiles (i.e. gender, educational level, family status, stage in the life-cycle, length of residence in the country/area etc.). Questions addressed to the interviewees covered their migration/mobility history and aspirations and their perceptions and experiences of the effect of migration on the area and material and non-material aspects of their well-being and future plans. Migration research poses particular and important challenges when conducting cross-language and multiple language research (Squires, 2006; Inhetveen, 2012). Interviews were carried out in Greek, Romanian, English, and Arabic—as members of the research team spoke those languages—, and when possible were recorded with the participants' permission; alternatively, extensive notes were kept. With the exception of the interviews conducted in Arabic, which were translated into English, coding and analysis took place in the language in which the interview took place. We conducted thematic analysis on the data, following Charmaz's (2006) "flexible" grounded theory approach to data coding and analysis. The analysis that follows focuses on the approaches of non-movers, residents (locals) living in rural areas in Western Greece, regarding the contribution of the various categories of movers against the movers' own assessment of their well-being.

In fact, the wider area of Western Greece has experienced various population movements (e.g., in-migration and out-migration and/or seasonal movements) in different periods. These included movements of international migrants who had

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[1]One should take into account that, thanks to historical and structural factors, there are still strong bonds between urban and rural areas in the south of Europe. Unlike in the majority of northern European countries, Greek socio-economic development was not accompanied by a wide disengagement from the rural (Papadopoulos 2018). What this means for the interviews with the 'local' population is that referencing this "rural" origin made it easy to initiate the interview and enhance the trust between the participants.

TABLE 2 | Migrant population of Regional Units of Ilia and Achaia.

Country/Region of origin	Achaia	Ilia	Total
EU	3,130	4,638	7,768
Romania	*808*	*950*	*1,758*
Other European	11,919	7,687	19,606
Albania	*11,149*	*7,379*	*18,528*
Africa	578	103	681
Asia	1,370	2,128	3,498
Other countries	442	333	775
Total	17,439	14,889	32,328

Source: ELSTAT, Population Census 2011.

been living and working in different urban or rural regions of Greece and saw new employment prospects in the intensive agricultural sector, but also internal migrants originating from large urban centres who settled in the area, combining employment opportunities with the search for a better quality of life. Based on the Population Census data, almost one third have moved to the research sites from another rural or urban centre, particularly from Athens, while this tendency has increased in pace over the last 20 years or so. These developments were combined with the out-migration of locals towards urban centres for educational and employment purposes, leading to the depopulation of the most marginal villages. More recently, several Syrian refugees have been living in the Myrsini open refugee camp while they wait for their asylum claim to be accepted and/or recognised under the refugee regime. In short, the area includes places that have experienced both depopulation and internal and international migration.

Our research site comprises two Regional Units in the Peloponnese peninsula--Ilia and Achaia—which belong administratively to the Region of Western Greece. The plains of the Regional Unit of Ilia in Western Greece are the largest in the Peloponnese, but the region is also known for the coastal wetlands of Kotichi and Kaïafa, which are areas of rare natural beauty and ecological value. In terms of economic activity, agriculture, stock breeding and food processing have long been the main economic activities of the local population, alongside tourism. Currently, agriculture is still an important pillar of the economy of Ilia (27.3% of employment), although most of the population is employed in the service sector (48.9%). The Regional Unit of Achaia has a limited primary sector (8.1%) and an adequately developed tertiary sector (66.5%) (ELSTAT, 2011). There has been an expansion in horticulture and greenhouse cultivation, while more recently strawberry growing has experienced a rapid rise; currently, over 90 percent of Greece's strawberries are grown in Western Greece, and specifically in the villages of Manolada and Nea Manolada (Papadopoulos and Fratsea, 2017). The capital of Achaia is Patras, which is the third largest city in Greece and Greece's main port to Italy.

International migration to the area dates back to the early 1990s, when it was primarily connected with the collapse of the socialist regimes in neighbouring Balkan countries. Currently, Albanians comprise the majority of the migrant population, followed by Bulgarian, Romanian and Asian migrants (see **Table 2**). Following the recent refugee/migration crisis in 2015, a refugee camp was established in Myrsini Village, in a former holiday resort called "LM Village", in 2016. This initiative

was also facilitated at the time by the mayor of the area, who is of Syrian descent. Currently, 280–300 Syrian refugees are living in this small camp.

The Region of Western Greece is not considered homogeneous, but rather a multiplicity of social spaces that overlap in the same geographical area (Cloke and Milbourne, 1992). The area comprises small villages, towns, coastal areas, environmentally-protected areas and remote places, all of which are affected by various forms of mobility. Hence, fieldwork was conducted in various localities within the Regional Units, including different areas such as Valtholomio, Myrsini, Arkoudi, Amaliada, Aghios Nikolaos, Manolada, Lechaina and Lapa. All these areas can be considered mostly agricultural, with some having a "mildly" touristic profile.

INTERTWINED STORIES OF MOBILITY AND WELL-BEING IN WESTERN GREECE

The determinants of quality of life in the Greek countryside are discussed in the interviews with the various population groups. Generally, the accounts offered here underscore the marine and natural environment, place attachment and a sense of belonging, how stress-free, serene and calm life is compared to life in the city, but also the lack of accessibility and connectivity with other areas and the limited infrastructures and implications of the prolonged economic crisis. What is more, which factor prevails in the narrative of each population group differs depending on age, life phase, marital status, gender and occupation.

The analysis of the qualitative material reveals at least two discourses: definitions and aspects of the *well-being of rural areas* and individual perceptions and practices of *well-being in rural areas*. The former relates to the characteristics of the rural areas themselves as they are assessed by the different population groups. These characteristics include the natural environment, local infrastructures, and the implications of different migration flows in the area, while the latter refers to subjective interpretations of well-being which are linked to emotions, aspirations, hopes, dreams, imaginations, and a sense of belonging to the rural community. Mobility lies at the heart of well-being, but the relationship between mobility and well-being is complex and multifaceted and differs between population groups. By and large, residents consider mobility/migration essential in economic and demographic terms for the enhancement of the well-being of rural areas, while movers see it as a strategy for advancing the quality of life of individuals who move to the countryside and for improving one's own well-being in those places. As we shall see in the analysis of the interviews, the relationship between perceptions of well-being of and within rural areas is not straightforward; rather, conflicting interests, views and discourses are foregrounded by the different population groups.

Aspects of Well-Being in Rural Western Greece

The beauty of the natural environment is one of the themes that figure strongly in people's narratives explaining the quality of life in the area. In general, interviewees underlined the unique

characteristics of "their" countryside, which combines forests and agricultural landscapes with the marine environments of the coastal communities. Examining the narratives of the locals, one identifies an unspoken pride connected to their place of residence, its characteristics compare to other rural or urban areas, and what it offers. They often underscore the role of the village's marine environment for the quality of life of the place. As Maria argues:

"[O]ur sea is very nice. If we take care of it [our sea] (...) I criticize anyone who does not take the care needed to keep our beach clean. We have a beautiful sea, not deep, in which anyone can swim, even by crawling" (Maria, 64 years old).

Interestingly, the role the natural environment plays in well-being in rural areas is more often underlined by those who recently moved to such places. For many, this combination of marine and agricultural landscape acted as a pull factor in the deliberation process leading up to their decision to migrate. Many Romanian migrants include the natural environment among the factors that influenced their decision to stay in Western Greece. As Dorina explains, Western Greece is a place that combines all the characteristics of a natural and marine environment. As she says: "I like it here, because here [in the plain] I have the sea. There, there's the mountain. I have everything here" (Dorina 50 years old). Along similar lines, a "better" life closer to nature is considered a "family dream," a goal achieved by moving to another place. Anton explains that the initial hardships of moving to another country are "worth it," since he can provide his family with a better quality of life in the coastal village: "There are many [factors] I consider important in my decision to stay here. [My son] says to me, "Dad, when will we go to the sea?." We will not go this week, but we will go next week. I put €10–20 gas in the car and off we go to the sea. And what a sea! If we were in Romania, "When will we go to the sea, dad?" would mean me having to work for a year to travel 600 km by car and spend 1,000€ for a week for the three of us (...) the Black Sea is nice, but not for me (Anton 37 years old). Such narratives show that beyond individual interpretations of well-being there is a family perspective to well-being where individual and family quality of life intersects, and personal quality of life is assessed in view of the well-being of the members of the family.

As expected, in the aftermath of an extremely severe economic recession, assessments of well-being in rural areas hinge equally on economic factors. Although the impact of the crisis varied between sectors and geographical areas (Papadopoulos et al., 2019), the ramifications of the crisis for the local economy were given particular emphasis during the interviews. Two opposing discourses surface from the analysis of qualitative material: On the one hand, the contraction of the national economy resulted both in rising unemployment/underemployment, but also in a cutting back on consumption in the local economy. Tasia (59 years old), a shop owner in a small village, remembers with nostalgia the "previous" years before the financial crisis, when—she claims—consumption was higher: "The economic situation is tough in the village. I'm on the verge of closing the store." In a similar vein, Angelos emphatically illustrates the implications of the crisis. He considers the economic situation in the region to have deteriorated since 2009: "Year by year, the situation has worsened. In fact, it's been a drama here this year

[2019]. No one comes into the store and, generally speaking, the shops aren't doing any business anymore. Consumers are turning to the big supermarkets, which are cheaper, and letting the smaller shops close. Here, our local market [in the central square] was full of shops. Now ... everything is closed" (Angelos 70 years old). Yet, for those working in the primary sector, agriculture remained a buffer for securing some income. In fact, as Nikos argues, those who worked in agriculture were more resilient during the recession: "The financial crisis is... a special case. Somehow, we [the farmers] have always been in "crisis." We have always been living through a crisis, you know... I remember always putting something aside for a rainy day (...) I looked ahead. We don't own extensive land property, instead we have 200 olive trees and a small plot in the village (Nikos 65 years old).

Interestingly, the newcomers in the wider area, Romanian migrants and internal migrants alike, acknowledge the severe implications of the economic recession for the Greek economy, contest the local entrepreneurs' view of limited opportunities and consider rural areas to be places of opportunity rather than scarcity. The well-being of rural areas is anticipated and considered better compared to the cities. They have a romanticised view of their current place of residence, which they see as a destination characterised by a growing number of employment positions, a place where investments are achievable, and a new future lies ahead.

As the following quote reveals, the interviewee moved to the local village when she found a permanent position as a civil servant there. As the economic environment was rather insecure, she left her job in Athens. In her opinion: "There are professional opportunities here. Only that. To tell the truth, in the private sector you simply have no idea how long [you'll have a job]. There's an expiration date. For a woman, the private sector is very hard." (Xanthi 45 years old). In the same vein, another interviewee worked for many years in Athens and abroad as a film and art director, but by 2012 couldn't get any new projects. She therefore decided to follow her husband to his ancestral village, where he owned some land with a house and a small farm. She moved to a village for the first time in her life. She made a new start as a housewife, a small food producer and a shop owner, while she also made certain steps to promote culture and art in the area. She describes her position like this: "[I] came here and became an economic migrant" (Violetta 52 years old).

Yet, for the Syrian refugees living in the area, well-being is not closely associated with labour market opportunities. The majority of pathways to labour market participation are precarious and unstable jobs. In fact, there are numerous quotes describing problems they face finding paid employment in the local labour market. We observe different attitudes on the part of respondents in relation to their integration into the local labour market, while the exploitation they experienced in Turkey (prior to coming to Greece) often continues once they are in Greece.

"I tried in Kylene [a nearby town]. I go to Kylene almost every day, going there. Talking to people, trying to find job, work, not lucky. Someone offered work (...) olive trees. I worked about 20 days, and he gave no money. I pay tomorrow, I pay tomorrow, 20 days and he disappeared. (Mohammed, 30 years old).

"At first, we were working in a greenhouse. They still haven't paid us." (Shana, 32 years old).

"[I found work] at the greenhouses last summer, and I was working for a farmer. He didn't give us water. [I was paid] 15 euro every day. [For work of] Nine hours. (Usama, 25 years old).

Most interviewees agree that mobilities have had a positive impact on the well-being of rural areas, although each population group foregrounds different aspects of migration/mobility. It became obvious during the interviews that some rural villages have been losing population for a long time. The young generation did not really aspire to staying and living in these areas but wanted to move to nearby cities (such as Patras), Athens or even abroad instead. In this sense, these areas have been experiencing a process of depopulation and are mostly inhabited by older people. This feeling of depopulation or abandonment came over strongly in local people's narratives. This is confirmed by the last Population Census which shows that the wider area's population declined by 7.6%, in spite of the recent migration flows. Many respondents underlined the need for investment and "better" infrastructure to attract younger people back to their localities, illustrating the contestations of the local development dynamics.

"This place needs youth and jobs and then everything else will take its course. The place does not need anything else (Foteini, 47 years old).

"In the area I would like to have two playgrounds. I cannot go because I am getting older, but for the children who will come here, to have [as a place] something to make them happy, something good. Because I pass through some villages where there are like not even 10 people, 15 people, they are families. (. . .). This is what I would like in the village. (. . .). Not costly infrastructure, just two squares to hang out in. That would be very nice. Let the people gather. . . That is, to do something, to attract the people [back]. That's what I think is missing" (Maria 64 years old).

In general, in-migration is considered beneficial for the well-being of rural areas. However, most of the local population distinguished between the various forms of migration. Over the years, due to the different population movements and migration flows, a rural ethnic diversity has emerged. Attitudes and perceptions regarding migration vary, depending on ethnic background and length of residence in the area. More to the point, Albanians, Romanians and Bulgarians who migrated to the area in the 1990s are generally seen as part of the local economy and society; they live in the villages with their families, work there for years and years, and their children eventually go to school with the children of local people. A more "utilitarian" approach is taken with the more recently arrived Bangladeshis and Pakistanis who work in the intensive agriculture. These nationalities are mainly represented by single men, with limited participation in the local public sphere. Although their contribution to the local agricultural sector is frequently voiced, their presence in everyday life is generally silenced. The presence of asylum seekers in the nearby camp facility of Myrsini, on the other hand, is acknowledged but their presence in the area is considered provisional.

"[There are migrants in the area] I see some people who have a darker skin. I think they are from India or somewhere. I know them; I saw them last year, too. Of course, there are also some Albanians, they have been settled here for many years; they have their houses here. They have their families. Everything is ok, it's all good. (. . .) [they] shop here. They speak broken English. I think they work locally in agriculture. They do not cause any problems" (Afroditi, 32 years old).

By the same token, Tasia argues that migration is crucial for the regeneration of rural areas: *"Migrants who have families, they have not changed the place. They have changed the place positively. They work here. They help the economy. …But also, the other people from Pakistan, Bangladesh they also help, too. They come, shop, and spend their money. And they are well-behaved people"* (Tasia 59 years old).

In economic terms, immigration contributed to the survival and expansion of the agricultural sector in the area. Many interviewees said that that the younger generation was reluctant to work in agriculture, and migrants thus help grease the wheels of the local agricultural labour market. *"The young people would not do the kind of jobs we have here that need to be done [agricultural jobs]. They would not work in the fields. Do you think the Greeks would do agricultural work? How do you see it? I do not see Greek people working in the fields, just Albanians and other nationalities...To be honest, we get migrants to do our jobs, too"* (Afroditi 32 years old). This quote confirms the prevalent trend of migrants replacing the indigenous labour force in agricultural activities in Greece and across southern Europe (Papadopoulos 2015; Corrado et al. 2016).

A few interviewees expressed negative opinions about the effects of migration on rural well-being. For example, one respondent said that migration has not really helped the area, arguing that migration was having a generally negative impact. This negative impact was allegedly connected to the presence of migrants, which creates conflicts in the community:

"Migration creates frictions here; it creates social frictions. In general, it creates a lot of talk between people here... the local people do not go out much, they do their shopping and go back to their houses. I think migration has played a role in that. I believe that migration has played some sort of role in that" (Markos 39 years old).

Apart from these positive or negative representations of migration, there were many informants who held contradictory opinions and stances on migration and its effects on the area. These perceptions would simultaneously communicate both positive and negative aspects of the effects of migration on the local environment. For instance, Aris, a retiree who spent most of his life in Athens and only returned to his village after he stopped work, argued that migration is beneficial for the area, as it provided much-needed labour. However, he also stated migration has changed the place for the worse. His rationale for doing so was based either on cultural reasons or issues relating to law and order (Aris, 73 years old).

To sum up, the contribution of mobilities to the well-being of rural areas is a rather vexed issue. The vast majority of the interviewees referred to the positive impact on the local demography and economy, as migrants cover labour shortages

in some economic sectors and support local consumption. Most of the internal migrants, viewing their current rural area of residence with a cosmopolitan gaze, tend to express more positive attitudes about international migrants and refugees. The negative implications relate more to the allegedly ethnic antagonisms between migrants which have the potential to hinder social cohesion. Therefore, although many locals acknowledged the fact that the economic crisis impacted on migrants as well as locals, some locals expressed the opinion that the severe economic crisis might have changed the way in which local people perceived migration. This supports findings from public opinion polls conducted during the period of the economic crisis. According to this line of thought, the economic crisis has created a less hospitable environment for migrants and has negatively influenced local perceptions of migration.

Everyday Practices of Well-Being in Rural Areas

The narratives of movers and non-movers alike make it clear that well-being in rural areas is closely related with their hopes, dreams and aspirations, leading to various constructions of the "rural." In this context, the "good life" in rural areas is associated with emotions, feelings, and social relations. The "rural life" is imagined and experienced differently by the various categories within the different population groups, while their perceptions of living well in rural areas change during the life-course. Hence, the meaning of what is a "good" or "bad" rural life may change for local residents, internal migrants, international migrants and refugees.

Locals relate their individual well-being in rural areas to the rural place itself. In their description, they say they could not imagine themselves living somewhere else or having the good life in another place. Being born and raised there, they feel rooted and have deep ties to the land and to other members of the community. Looking back in retrospect, Tasia argues: *"Our [family] life in the village was so good...that I don't know if anyone else has ever had such a good life, whose life unfolded like ours"* (Tasia 59 years old). Similarly, many locals argue that the good life consists not only of material aspects, but also far more importantly of the interpersonal relationships that develop in a place, of sociability and belonging. As Costas argues, "*I have never thought about leaving this place, I feel I belong here*" (Costas 45 years old). Angelos argues more emphatically: "*I was born here, I was raised here, and I will die here. I do not see any reason to go anywhere else (. . .) life here is not like in Athens or big cities where you don't know your neighbour. Here everybody knows everybody*" (Angelos 70 years old).

For migrants and refugees alike, initial aspirations play an important role in the decision to migrate: they plan their life in a place other than their current residence based on the imaginaries of potential and/or real destinations. For most Romanian migrants, imagining a "good life" somewhere else was part of their social imaginaries even before the collapse of the socialist regime (Fratsea, 2019; Fratsea and Papadopoulos, 2020). Migration seemed like a potential means of starting anew after a watershed event in their life, and/or like a strategy to improve their well-being. In this context, social networks help them construct "images" about places and facilitates the creation of a vision of what life may be like there. The story of Nora (33 years old) is telling. She explains how her family members, who lived in Western Greece, would send her pictures and paintings of landscapes and vineyards in the Peloponnese. Later in life, when she had the opportunity to move to another country, she recalls: *"I wanted to go to Greece!"*. Although many factors contributed to her decision to move to Greece, she argues that those images of a different life in the countryside stayed with her until her arrival.

In a similar vein, Constantin's brother was already in Greece before Constantin embarked on his migration journey. As he recalls: "*In my mind, I imagined Greece like heaven, you know. . . Summer vacations, pleasant climate (...) OK, I didn't have a specific picture, no detailed picture about exactly how life was here. . .But life here is different [compared to how he imagined it]. Not that it disappointed me, on the contrary, I understood that to live well you must work, nothing is taken for granted*" (Constantin 37 years old). Constantin associated his initial aspirations with specific feelings invoked by images of the natural beauty of rural Greece. As he had just finished high school at that time, the destination area was associated with feelings of freedom and joy, of being carefree. Positive or difficult experiences that arise later on de-romanticize these initial—youthful—aspirations, and rural areas became places where someone can increase their well-being and/or improve their social status.

For Syrian refugees, on the other hand, living well is feasible anywhere but their country of residence; in a place where they feel secure and respected (Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2019). More often than not, they do not relate initial aspirations to specific places, but rather to specific countries in which they believe they would have a better standard of living. Germany, Belgium and other countries in Western Europe are among their desired destinations. Yet, they implicitly compare the livelihood they experience in the villages of Western Greece with the life they could have in the big cities of Western Europe. They construct a specific picture of what life chances they would have there out of information gleaned from networks, the media and social media.

The following quote captures their initial aspirations before leaving their country, as they describe "where" the good life can be found, where he envisions his family growing up: [in] *"a country that understands my value. The country that appreciates my work, my labour. The one that respects my humanity. And which helps me? This is my country. Not the country that kills me and kills my family, and throws me in jail, and tortures me. That country is not my home. You know what I mean? I mean, I am being very honest. I mean, just waking up each morning, having a coffee with my wife, going out with her to buy some stuff, and I say to her, "How can I not love Greece?." We talk about it, my wife and I, and we say that, if only there were more job opportunities. . . otherwise, I would never leave Greece"* (Makram 36 years old).

The majority of Syrians refugees say they feel "at home" in Greece. The notion of "home" includes various configurations and meanings (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011). Among the factors they mention is remembrance, the strong similarities between Greece and Syria. It seems they perceive various aspects such as the

landscape, the geomorphology, the environmental setting, peoples' attitudes and cultural attributes as being similar between the two countries. According to their interviews, all these factors can contribute to a better life and to their developing a sense of belonging and place attachment. However, they mainly see their presence in the area as temporary; they adopt a kind of "tourist gaze" (Urry, 2002) as they wait for the travel documents ("Ausweis") to move to another country. For instance, Sara, who lives temporarily in the camp in Myrsini village waiting for her asylum application to be approved, recalls living on the islands when she first arrived in Greece, and says that living close to nature is better compared to other places. She explains how she and her sister made small trips and visited the Neda river in the Western Peloponnese, a place of natural beauty and attraction. After the interview, she showed us pictures of all the places in the Peloponnese and Zante island that she had visited.

For Romanian migrants, feeling "at home" and a sense of belonging depend on the social relations one develops in the place of residence over the life course: *"You get attached to the place. . .you know, for the last few years, when I've gone back to Romania, on the way back, when I cross through the Greek-Bulgarian border, I say 'I'm home'. . .and when I get from Patras to Pyrgos and then onto the narrow country roads, I say to myself "Ah, I'm finally home"* (Aurelia, 49 years old).

When examining internal migration towards Western Greece, at least two types of internal migrants emerge (cf. Halfacree, 1995): first, those you were born and grew up in Western Greece, but moved away for educational or employment reasons later in their adult lives, and second, those who were born and raised elsewhere (e.g., Athens), with no prior connections to the area, but who decided to live in Western Greece. Examining internal migrants' narratives, we can discern two constructions of well-being in rural areas, which are illustrated in the following examples:

Foteini was born in a village in Western Greece 47 years ago. She moved to Athens for studies and stayed there for 25 years, working as an accountant. Although she never imagined herself living in a rural area, she saw a better life for her children there. As she says: *"You are next to nature. (. . .) The reason I had no problem returning [here] and knowing that I would not have people to socialize with, was because I knew I could do what I'm doing today—I'll take the car and in 5 minutes, I can be at the sea or in the forest, I can take the dog or my child, or go alone, stay for an hour, walk, run, collect shells [on the beach] and that covers my needs. Okay, I'm older now, too. If I was 20 years old, this wouldn't cover my needs. It didn't back then, and that's why I left and never came back"* (Foteini, 47 years old). Life in rural Greece is connected to a better, more relaxed and healthier quality of life compared to the city. Yet, it is evident that the stage in the life cycle plays an important role. Put differently, the perception of the rural place differs depending on the stage in the life course. As Foteini says, she feels that she appreciates the quiet life and the slower rhythms in the countryside more, now that she is older, while her children have a better life living in an environment close to nature compared to life in cities where pollution is higher. Hence, the well-being of the family in the rural area is better compared to the city.

Niki, 45 years old, was born in a village in Western Greece. Initially, she moved to Athens to attend university and then moved to Western Europe where she started her family and established a business. However, she explains that a few years ago: *"I didn't have any free time. I was feeling that the more I engaged with more, the more I wanted to advance my work, but I had no time for anything else and I wanted to enjoy my family life, my children, a little. (. . .) Yes, I was in this situation and I wanted to see what else there is in life! I remember saying to myself: 'Do I want to be like this forever?'"* (Niki 45 years old). Eventually, she and her husband decided to move back to her place of origin. She explains their rationale: *"It was a call we'd discussed for some time. (. . .) Many times, we used to say 'How nice, it would be for the kids to go out in the fields and play, to be outside in the countryside, to have the rest of the family close by, their grandmother and their grandfather. My husband's family are scattered around other places. (. . .) We said we'd try another way of life, a more humane way of living! And we finally made the decision—we left and came to Greece. (. . .) I confess that it was a shock, because I'd been there for nearly 20 years, and we were used to another way of life"*. In other words, her decision to move back to rural Greece was based on the imagined quality of life that she and her family would enjoy there, but also on the possibility of strengthening relations with her family.

Yet, constructing rural places from far away can result in idealized views of well-being. As Niki confessed later in her interview, there is some distance between the expected well-being and the reality. A sense of belonging and place attachment does not always follow on from prior memories of place and growing up at home: *"All those years [of absence], when you visit the place, you are on vacation, and of course everything is nicer when you are on vacation."* In fact, many internal migrants confess that at times they feel like "strangers" in the place they have settled in. Sometimes, they felt socially excluded and able to communicate only with other internal migrants, with whom they share a code of "communication." Thus, they sometimes feel detached from the rural places they initially belonged to. Foteini feels dislocated and explains: *"You feel. . .stiff. . .you are a stranger. . . When I am at home, in my space, on my beaches and in my fields, I feel at home. But when I am with the people who live here, I feel like a stranger. In objective terms, I was a stranger because I was in Athens for 26 years. The people I remembered living here have passed away. I do not recognize anyone from the younger generation, because people my age have left the village. Therefore, I am a stranger"* (Foteini, 47 years old). The analysis of how internal migrants see their living in the area of their residence illustrates their sense of cosmopolitanism, which does not compromise easily with local attitudes and manners. Evidently, many of them may feel closer to the international migrants and refugees than to the locals; however, the local people are more accepting of internal migrants than international migrants and refugees.

CONCLUSION

This is the first time research has been conducted in Greece into how the four population groups—i.e. international migrants, refugees, internal migrants and the locals—perceive their well-being in rural areas and their well-being in relation to the other

groups. The discussion of the qualitative findings reveals the complexity of well-being in rural Greece, especially when the perceptions and attitudes of the various population groups are analysed in detail. Some of this evidence confirms previous research on the strategic role of migrant labour in Greek agriculture (Papadopoulos, 2015; Papadopoulos and Fratsea, 2017), while other reflects public discourses during and in the aftermath of the economic crisis.

The "locals," who are identified here with the non-movers, tend to have a more naturalistic and traditionalist view of well-being in rural areas associated with "parochialism" and pride in living in the same settlement all their lives. Some locals may originate from nearby villages or from mountainous areas, and thus consider themselves as originating from the wider area, but the movers consider them all to be equally local. The scalar conceptualisation of the "locals" and internal migrants reflects an inability to demarcate between locals and cosmopolitans, since in real life the local/rural well-being merges various groups together.

The internal migrants share certain views with the international migrants as regards their understanding of rural areas as places of opportunity, since they acknowledge the existence of employment positions in agriculture and tourism as well as in self-employment. This view contradicts locals' perception of rural areas as being in decline, due to the low availability of economic opportunities. Moreover, a segment of the internal migrants shares a touristic gaze with refugees who see their rural area of residence as attractive due to its natural amenities and environmental qualities; at the same time, however, they recognise the lack of infrastructure and services which could further improve their material well-being. In their turn the locals acknowledge their sense of belonging and stress that they feel "at home."

The existing asymmetry between subjective and objective well-being in Greek rural areas, which is bypassed by the locals who assign more emphasis to their emotions and feelings about their place of residence, is acknowledged by all the other groups, who realize that the material well-being should be also prioritized alongside the subjective well-being. However, there is a distinction between two main groups: 1) those—the internal migrants and international migrants--who are keen to stay in rural areas, to be connected to rural areas and, at the same time, to try and build on the existing employment opportunities and/or undertake reasonable entrepreneurial initiatives; and 2) those who feel like sojourners—the refugees--, since they have no attachments to the rural places due to the lack of networks and/or initiatives on the part of the receiving society, but also due to the "imaginaries" of those movers in search of "greener pastures" in other countries.

Interestingly the "rural imaginary" becomes important among those who already feel that they are socially and economically integrated into local/rural places, but not among those whom the receiving rural places consider to be in "transit," "unconnected," or "exotic." The mechanisms of rural well-being include socio-economic parameters alongside belonging and place attachment.

All in all, two major intertwined challenges seem to emerge for well-being in rural areas in Greece: first, the challenge of improving the material well-being in rural areas by strengthening and supporting the role of internal and international migrants, who have positive aspirations and are in a position to take actions that will help regenerate their places economically; and second, the challenge of creating incentives and empowering newcomers as agents of change that will benefit rural places, and especially those places which are experiencing depopulation and decline. To address both challenges, the power geometry in rural places needs to be rebalanced in favour of the most dynamic and resourceful elements within them; in other words, to enable the newly-arriving populations to imagine themselves living in rural places.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because they are confidential as agreed upon with the study participants. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to the corresponding author.

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AP and LF have collected jointly the research material and have equally shared the writing of the paper. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Refugees' Encounters With Nordic Rural Areas–Darkness, Wind and "Hygge"!

Lise Herslund[1]* and Gry Paulgaard[2]

[1]*Department of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark, [2]UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway*

The paper investigates how refugees settled in rural Norway and Denmark experience and interact with their new rural places of residence. Theoretically, the paper finds inspiration in "phenomenology of practices" (Simonsen, Prog. Hum. Geogr., 2012, 37, 10–26), which emphasizes the bodily and sensory experiences of daily life that spur feelings of, for example, "orientation" or "disorientation". The empirical material is based on fieldwork and qualitative interviews with refugees and local volunteers in 2016/2017/2019 in small towns in the rural north of Norway and rural Denmark. There are several differences between the Norwegian and Danish rural areas, in relation to distances, climate and population density. Nonetheless, the ways in which the rural areas are experienced from within, by refugees settled there, show surprisingly many similarities. Many of the informants, in both the Norwegian and Danish cases, initially expressed frustration at being placed in rural areas without having any say in the matter. Those who were former city-dwellers especially experienced moments of disorientation, as their encounters with Nordic rural life were experienced as the opposite of their urban backgrounds. Limiting structural conditions very much shape the everyday lives of refugees in the first years, when they do not have a car or the financial capacity to find their own house. They feel stressed, with busy everyday lives made up of long commuting hours on public transport. In these first years of uncertainty, the dark and harsh weather very much adds to the feeling of stress and insecurity. What seem to add "orientation" are social relations with other refugees and local volunteers organizing activities.

Keywords: refugees, rural, nordic, everyday lives, weather, commuting, local volunteers

INTRODUCTION

The number of international migrants is increasing in rural areas. This is particularly the case in the Nordic countries, where the rural population is becoming more diverse than the EU average (Nørregaard, 2018). Here, dispersal policies have led refugees to regional towns and rural areas over recent decades (Larsen, 2011; Søholt et al., 2018). However, a large number of the refugees initially placed in rural areas in both Denmark and Norway have moved toward city areas over the years and also to a larger degree than other international migrants (Andersen, 2015; Ordemann, 2017). This paper explores the experiences of refugees arriving in rural areas in Denmark and Norway during the large influx of refugees in 2015/2016.

There is a debate as to whether refugees should be settled in rural areas at all. An argument for settling international migrants in rural areas has been that migrants can act as an important means for rural re-population, and many peripheral municipalities actively try to attract international

migrants to their communities (Hedberg and Haandrikman, 2014; Aure et al., 2018; Nørregaard, 2018; Søholt et al., 2018; Woods, 2018). However, several authors dispute the idea that refugees could be catalysts for peripheral development, when rural areas lack jobs as well as the resources and services to adequately cater for their needs (Wren, 2003; McAreavey and Argent, 2018; Woods, 2018). Urban areas are often portrayed as heterogeneous, providing an opportunity to "blend in" and be anonymous (Massey, 2007). Rural areas, on the other hand, have been described as places where being a refugee and migrant can be difficult, due to the pressure to conform to the culture and norms of the dominant majority (de Lima, 2012; Kelly, 2013; Eriksson et al., 2015; Rysst, 2017;). Rural areas have often been portrayed as homogenous, safe and stable, on the one hand, and boring, backwards, with a high degree of social control, on the other (Rye, 2006; Paulgaard, 2008). The view of rural areas as homogenous, cohesive and good places to live and grow up is deeply seated in the Norwegian and Danish social imaginaries (Gullestad, 2002; Mathisen, 2020). The belief that rural areas represent good places to live and that their stronger associational life could make it easier for refugees to integrate has been one of the reasons for adopting dispersal policies and settling refugees in rural areas (Larsen, 2011). Thus, rural social life whether promoting social control or social integration is another key factor in the debate on whether refugees should be placed in rural areas.

This paper aims to contribute to the debate by exploring how refugees settled in Nordic rural areas experience and interact with their new rural places of residence in their daily lives. The empirical material is based on fieldwork and qualitative interviews with refugees and local volunteers in 2016/2017/ 2019 in small towns in rural Norway and Denmark.

The paper finds that refugees in rural areas struggle with limiting structural conditions like long distances, limited employment possibilities and lack of affordable rental housing. Social relations with other refugees, immigrants and the local communities can help counter some of the problems of living in an unfamiliar environment and a rural setting. However, besides the social life and structural conditions, the more "physical" aspects of rural life-the material surroundings, including circumstances like the weather-affect refugees' experiences. Although there are great differences between the climate in northern Norway and Denmark, the refugees arriving in both areas were all quite affected by the harsher weather. This condition seems to be somewhat overlooked or found unimportant in other studies. The experiencing of nature, going out in all kinds of weather, taking walks and getting fresh air also play an important part in the "good life" in the Nordic countries. In Norway, such cultural beliefs regarding the importance of outdoor life are even evident in the school curriculum (Ødegaard and Marandon, 2019). Thus, in this study, we also bring forward the way in which the physical surroundings and the weather are experienced by the refugees.

Theoretically, we find inspiration in "phenomenology of practices" (e.g., Simonsen, 2012), which stresses the insufficiency of describing the world's structures without also paying attention to the way they are experienced from within.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Refugees' Phenomenology of Practice

In this paper, we take a starting point in the phenomenology of practice, which situates practical, embodied consciousness in the world: an "inter world", where meaning and materiality are inseparable (Simonsen, 2012:15). Materiality refers first and foremost to the examination of people's contact with their physical surroundings, taking into account that agency is constructed through material engagement in social practices. The materiality of a place is a part of the embodied nature of being (Lähdesmäki et al., 2016). Such a perspective implies acknowledging the interdependency between the social and material contexts for practice. The emphasis on materiality, on "the non-human and more than human" (Simonsen, 2012:21), gives space to nature and objects, without reducing one to the other. The encounters with physical objects, as well as surroundings, social relations and structures, constitute sensory experiences that include the situated body and the body as lived experience (Lødding and Paulgaard, 2019).

Simonsen (2012) focuses on how the world's structures are experienced from within. She describes how "active bodies" use their acquired schemes and habits to position their world around themselves. Such bodies are dynamic in measuring space in the construction of a meaningful world:

> Inhabiting space is both about "finding our way" and how we come to "feel at home". It therefore involves continuous negotiation between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar, making space habitable but also receiving new impressions depending on which way we turn and what is in reach. (Simonsen, 2012:16)

Simonsen (2012) also stresses that "bodies" are different and describes how immigrants can be blocked and stopped in their everyday life because of how they look: their "visibility". She describes a process of "othering" when immigrants are, for example, stopped when entering a nightclub, making them feel different and out of place. How such embodied difference shapes the meeting and engagement with their new places and how meanings form around these differences is a central concern.

(Kinkaid, 2020:169) points to the fact that "Difference is not located in space itself or in essential characteristics of bodies or things; rather, "differences" are formed through lived practice; sedimentation of experience". In order to understand the production and embodiment of difference, it is important to study the way embodied sedimentations form and delimit "the subject of difference". Such an approach will illuminate how different kinds of bodies encounter space differently. Kincaid uses the term "contradictions of space", referring to a moment occurring within the experience of a subject, when he or she does not, or cannot, practice space properly. In situations where the relation between the subject and the milieu fails to cohere, then the general background of perception and understanding, the acquired and embodied knowledge and competence, can be called into question: "Space becomes contradictory rather than

synthetic, the body becomes alienated, an object in space" (2020: 180). Being a refugee implies that acquired schemes and habits are not always useful in new contexts, and it is through everyday encounters that this is experienced. Such experiences can result in both spatial and social disorientation, "As the normative meanings and practices they know from home cannot be used" (Kinkaid, 2020:180).

According to Simonsen (2012), orientation and familiarity are connected to situations where the phenomenological body gains the capacity to orient itself in one way or another. Orientation is about both "finding our way" and "feeling at home". Familiarity is neither delimited nor static; Simonsen points out the dynamic aspect of familiarity continuously in formation. This relates to the understanding of the phenomenological body as dynamic and always in process, continuously weaving meaning throughout the course of its existence, in interaction with others and with its environment. Such a phenomenology of practice situates practical, embodied consciousness in the world: an "interworld", where meaning and materiality are inseparable (Mathisen, 2020; Simonsen, 2012:15).

Based on Ahmed (2006), Simonsen points out that orientation also involves moments of disorientation, similar to Kinkaid, (2020) "contradiction of space". Moments of disorientation might turn our world upside down. Such a feeling can shape insecurity and shatter one's sense of confidence in the foundation of one's existence. In such situations, support is needed to reground or re-orientate the relation to the world. According to Simonsen, (2012), moments of disorientation can be seen as destabilizing and undermining, but they can also be seen as productive moments, leading to new hopes and new directions. Spatial practice-the way our bodies move through the world using acquired schemes and habits-can, depending on how spaces are inhabited (when talking about immigrants, spaces that they were not intended to inhabit) and how the people that perform the practice meet, either reinforce dominant meanings and bodies or possibly open the door for new practices and spaces to emerge (Kinkaid, 2020).

Encountering the "Physical" World-Climate and Weather Conditions

The phenomenology of practice situates practical, embodied consciousness in the world, where meaning and materiality are inseparable (Simonsen, 2012:15). Materiality refers to the physical surroundings, but does it also include the weather? For inspiration on how to understand materiality and physical surroundings and their role in the phenomenology of practice, we look toward Ingold, (2010), who criticizes theories and thinking about the material world as comprising the two broad components of landscape and artifacts. He claims that much attention has been paid to the ways in which people engage with the things of this world, to the apparent capacity of things to act back, and to the "hybrid" agencies that are formed when persons and things combine in the production of effects. One example is the centrality of the weather to life and experiences; nevertheless, in the scholarly literature, scarcely a word is to be found on the

question of how the weather impacts on our daily life practices and experiences:

> Much has been written on the perception of landscape; virtually nothing on the perception of the weather. It is extraordinary that something that has such massive impact on people's activities, moods and motivations, indeed on the whole tenor of social life, has been so little considered. (Ingold, 2005:100)

Ingold claims that the failure to recognize the importance of the weather, not in human daily lives but in social theories, has to do with the lack of any conceptual framework within which to accommodate anything as protean and temperamental as the weather. He relates this to the fact that most scholars have considered materiality to be locked up in the congealed forms of the landscape and the solid objects resting on its surface-"on the hard physicality of the world" (Ingold, 2010:132). Ingold points out that such a conclusion is absurd. To draw the limits of materiality around the surfaces of the landscape and artifacts would be to leave the inhabitants of the landscape and artifacts in a vacuum. Ingold refers to (Gibson, 1979:106) and describes the air as a medium, stating that the quality of interaction will be tempered by what is going on in the medium, that is, by the weather (Ingold, 2010:133). According to Ingold, if the weather conditions our interaction with people and things, then it also conditions how we know them.

Migration can be described as a process of both disorientation and reorientation, as bodies both "move away" and "arrive" (Simonsen, 2012), and different bodies might encounter space differently (Kinkaid, 2020). When arriving in the Nordic areas, how is space the new town of residence experienced? What experiences result in feelings of meaning and belonging, familiarity and orientation and making the space habitable, and what experiences spur feelings of disorientation and contradiction? In the following, we will focus on the primacy of encounters, "of bodily encounters in all their complexity both structural, social and physical" (Simonsen, 2012:12).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper investigates the experiences of refugees settling in rural areas in Northern Norway and Denmark in 2015/2016. The empirical material is mainly based on fieldwork and qualitative interviews with refugees and local volunteers who have started up activities for refugees in the local areas.

The Norwegian Case

The Norwegian case takes its cue from the situation that occurred in the autumn of 2015 in the north of Norway, a region often termed "the marginal edge of the northern periphery". In the course of a few months, over 5,500 migrants from 35 nations–mostly from Syria (40%), Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran–crossed the Russian-Norwegian border into Eastern Finnmark, the northernmost county in Norway. Many of those who came through this Arctic migration route were

settled in small rural places in the north of Norway (Integrerings og mangfoldsdirektoratet (IMDi), 2019.

Qualitative interviews started at the beginning of 2016 at a refugee camp near the Russian border. Ten families, both mothers and fathers applying for asylum status in Norway, were interviewed. After the first period in the refugee camp, the families were granted asylum and three of them were settled in the same area in the northern part of Norway. Through the contact with these families, the research team established contact with other refugee families in the same area. The selection of informants followed the snowball method. The core of the informants were families who came from Syria, and these informants led to other refugee families and informants. The Norwegian case consists of a study of three small places in the same area, one with around 1,000 inhabitants, another with 2000 inhabitants, and the third with around 5,000 inhabitants.

The research is based on fieldwork with eight families living in these three places in the north of Norway. The families had from eight to two children, and most of the interviews and field conversations were carried out with the mothers and the oldest children. The fieldwork period is from two to four years, as some of the families have been contacted since the beginning of 2016. This gives the possibility to follow the process of finding one's place and settling down in a new country.

The Danish Case

The Danish case also takes its starting point in the flows of refugees coming, especially from Syria, up through Europe in 2015, when all European countries saw a marked rise in the numbers of refugees arriving. In Denmark, more than eight times more refugees arrived in 2015 than in earlier years (UNHCR, 2020). Some of these refugees ended up being resettled in rural areas.

In the Danish case, a total of seven towns of different sizes across four rural municipalities spread out across Denmark were selected: two towns with around 4,000 inhabitants and towns of 1,500, 1,100, 900, 800 and 600 inhabitants, respectively. In the Danish case, the key criteria for the selection of towns were 1) where refugees granted asylum had been placed following the influx of refugees in 2015, and 2) the extent to which the local community had initiated activities for them.

Interviews were conducted with a number of refugees resettled in these towns, local volunteers initiating activities for refugees, and key formal stakeholders, for example integration officers and NGO (Non-Governmental Organisations) representatives. The selection of refugees also followed the snowball method.

In Denmark, a total of 19 interviews with refugees were conducted, 15 of them with a single family or a single person; the rest were group interviews with 5–10 people. Five of the interviews constitute re-interviews, a year after the first interviews with refugees, across five of the towns. All interviews focused on themes such as refugees' everyday life, their use and view of the town, their social relations, their wishes, and any plans, for the future.

Case Presentations

Often the Nordic countries are treated as one entity. In much of the literature, the "Nordic rural area" is a commonly used term. What is common across the Nordic countries is the welfare state, and in Nordic migration studies the integration of immigrants and refugees into the welfare state has been a central research concern (Emerek, 2003; Jöhncke, 2007). But the Nordic rural areas also have several differences, especially in climate, geography and spatial distances. In the case of Northern Norway, it is three times the size of the whole of Denmark.

Norway is the northernmost country in Europe. In 2019, the total number of inhabitants was 5,328,212, while the country's total land area is around 325,000 square meters. The number of inhabitants in Denmark is 5,784,188, and the land area is about 43,084 square kilometres. Because of the size of the countries and the number of inhabitants, the density of the population is higher in Denmark than in Norway. Most of the migrants, as well as refugees, arriving in both Denmark and Norway live in urban areas, but both countries have refugees settled in rural areas (Larsen, 2011; Integrerings og mangfoldsdirektoratet (IMDi), 2019; Mathisen, 2020).

Norway has a strategy for settling refugees across the country. The settling is based on collaboration between the central government and the Association of Norwegian local Land and regional Authorities. The initiative comes from the central government, asking municipalities across the country to accept refugees for settlement, and the municipal councils can decide whether they have the capacity to settle a suggested number of refugees, according to economic and housing opportunities. Municipalities that settle refugees receive economic support for the first five years a refugee is settled. The municipalities must provide the first housing and an obligatory two-year introductory program for adults (Mathisen, 2020). The introductory program in Norway consists of language training and lessons about Norwegian society. The participants in the program are also given the opportunity to practice language in a workplace. The municipality is responsible for providing a working environment for the newcomer, in order to practice language. The place for language practice does not have to be a place where the person wants to work in the future. Toward the end of the program, the refugee is expected to participate in a work program, designed to increase the chances of getting a job or to continue education ().

Denmark has had a strategy to disperse refugees across the country since 1999. According to the Danish Ministry of Integration, the aim of the spatial dispersal policy is to secure a better geographical distribution of new refugees and promote their integration into Danish society, by reducing their risk of becoming socially and economically marginalized in urban ethnic ghettos (Larsen, 2011).

In Denmark, similarly to Norway, it is the municipality in which the refugees are settled that has the main responsibility for their integration. The municipality must cater for the refugees' integration for a period of three years, by offering language classes and, later, job training. It is also the responsibility of the municipality to find housing (Larsen, 2011). In both Denmark and Norway, the refugees are permitted to leave the place where

they have been settled before the introductory period has ended; however, the refugees might then lose their rights, such as the municipality having to provide suitable housing, etc.

Analysis of Data

The data from the two case studies (Danish/Norwegian) were initially analyzed as two separate studies. In both countries, the interview data were analyzed first through the use of an open approach, searching for common themes and points across the interview transcripts and summaries. Then, more focused thematic analyses were performed, following themes such as refugees' everyday life, their meeting with their new place of residence, their use and view of the new town, their social relations, their plans for the future, etc. The two country analyses were then initially compared through a discussion of main points found and how they played out in the Danish and Norwegian cases, respectively. This discussion led to a listing of key points to unpack and compare: a list that resembles the structure of the following "results" section.

RESULTS

Feeling Powerless and Different From the Start

The placing and settling of refugees in rural communities are matters of political and multi-level governance. In both the Danish and Norwegian cases, the refugees had little or no influence over where they were settled, and most felt powerless, as they could not choose themselves but had to be placed without any say in the matter. It made them feel like second-class citizens. A young married Syrian woman in Denmark said: "*I have an uncle in Århus and have made friends in the refugee camp with other refugees now settled near Ålborg. We could help each other out, but now I have to be settled in this little town away from everything . . . I am so frustrated and feel like cattle.*"

In both the Danish and Norwegian cases, most refugees came from Syria (2/3), with the rest coming from Eritrea and Somalia, then Afghanistan and Iraq. The Syrian refugees were often city-dwellers and, in the interviews, particularly refugees from Syria stressed that they preferred to live in cities because that was where they came from and were used to. "*We are city people, and we only know how to live with life around us,*" the father of a Syrian family said. On the contrary, the Eritreans and Somalis were often from villages. The refugees who came from urban areas had considerably more formal education than the adults from rural areas, some of whom had no formal education; thus, the Eritreans and Somalis were educated to a lesser extent.

In both Norway and Denmark, the refugees with city backgrounds felt frustration when they found out they were to be placed in a small town. At the refugee camps in both Denmark and Norway, the stories among the refugees were that being placed in rural areas after obtaining asylum would be dark and lonely, and there would be no jobs. The refugees from rural areas were, however, more content with being placed in rural areas. Some of the mothers from rural areas in Syria and Somalia stated

that they liked to live in small places and reported that they quickly got into a daily routine. They joined up with other refugee women, with whom they met several times a week, prepared food, talked and took care of the small children. Their older children, on the other hand, could hardly wait to finish secondary school so they could move to bigger places–similar to many of their local Norwegian and Danish peers living in the same place.

Difficult Everyday Movement-Experiencing Distance

In both the Danish and Norwegian cases, it was particularly the very stretched-out everyday life with long commuting hours that refugees initially experienced as stressful, overwhelming and also confusing. The former city-dwellers felt it especially hard, as they were used to being close to everything. Their initial "schemes and habits" of moving around in a denser city were very different from their new everyday life, with long commutes on public transport. In the Danish case, the main municipal town could often be reached within half an hour, so here it was more that the public transport was infrequent. In the Norwegian case, distances were huge, and going to the main municipal town would mean traveling for several hours, and public transport was infrequent.

Even though the distances varied in the two countries and across areas, the language classes refugees initially had to attend were, in all cases, centralized in the municipality's main town or even outsourced to a neighboring municipality. This meant that much time was spent on public transport, as no refugees initially could afford a car, nor did they have a driving license that was legally accepted. In addition to the language training, most refugees had to do work training, which could be anywhere in the municipality or outside the municipality. This could often mean even longer commuting hours, as the public transport rarely connected the smaller towns. For those who also had to deliver children to kindergartens or schools, which were not always found in the same small town of residency, even more time would be spent on public transport. In the Norwegian case, among the families that were placed in the smallest of the three municipalities, the parents had to commute by bus for 2 h to get to their place of work training.

The very busy everyday lives, with long commuting hours, were described by many as frustrating and difficult, spurring feelings of disorientation. The refugees could find help to figure out timetables and commuter cards from their municipal caseworker, but, as they only saw them every couple of months, those refugees who had found local people to help them or had other refugees around to ask for advice felt much less frustrated and alone. Some had joined locals who drove them to the doctor or to see other refugees in other towns. Most refugees could not get their driving license accepted and had to take a new test and theory course, which was expensive and difficult in a new language. So, the lack of a car limited and made difficult their everyday movement. It was frustrating, but it also made them feel different. As several said, "*All the locals have at least one car, as living in a rural area is dependent on having a car . . . so having no car makes you really stand out.*" It took a few years before any of the refugees could start driving. Those that

finally got a car found rural life much easier and less stressful, as commuting was a big part of their daily life for the first years.

Acquiring a driving license, and particularly driving lessons, represented an obstacle for some of the informants, particularly women living in a small village in the north of Norway. A couple of women reported that the only driving instructor in the village where they lived did not want to give lessons to people who were not Norwegian. The women had therefore to go to another municipality in order to have driving lessons; going there took more than 1 h by bus, each way. Taking driving lessons was too time-consuming for one of the women who had younger children, and she was therefore in a way "stopped", as Simonsen, (2012) also describes, in her effort to get a driving certificate.

Experiencing the Physical and Windy Rural Area

Several refugees describe the first months in their new places as very dark, cold and windy. The hours of darkness and the harshness of the weather differ enormously between the north of Norway and Denmark; nevertheless, the stories told about the encounters with nature and particularly the weather were surprisingly similar among the refugees settled in these different areas. Most refugees compared the wind and darkness to the lit-up city life and warm weather in their home countries.

Many refugees connected the darkness and the wind to feelings of loneliness and insecurity. The weather was also described as "uncomfortable" by several, who reported how they always walked quickly when they were outside to avoid the wind and rain from "*cutting through me*", "*hitting me*" or "*slicing my skin*". A young father in a Danish town said: "*I feel like not going outside, as the darkness seems intimidating and scary. . . .When it then also rains and the wind pushes me around, I feel like giving up.*" His wife suffered from depression on arrival, and he very much related it to the darkness and the feeling of loneliness and insecurity emanating from the dark winter.

One of the Syrian women who was settled with her family in a very small town in Norway stated that coming to this place in the late autumn was a huge challenge; the Sun had almost disappeared from the horizon and the autumn storms came one after another. The family had three children attending different levels at the local school, and the school was located 1 km from the house where they lived. As there was no bus and they could not get their driving license accepted, the children had to walk, often forcing themselves through severe weather along a dark road in order to get to the school. The mother said that they were all shocked and afraid of the windy weather. Walking from home to school in the early mornings, in wind and darkness, was very frightening. Thus, the distances are felt even more strongly when they have to be walked in harsh weather.

In these kinds of cases, with frustrated and frightened children, both the parents and children experienced moments of disorientation, where "The world was almost turned upside down" (Ahmed, 2006; Simonsen, 2012). As Ingold observes: "Indeed a strong wind can so overwhelm the senses as

virtually to drown our perception of contact with the ground" (Ingold, 2010:131). The mother with the frightened children said that she often doubted whether they had done the right thing in bringing their children to such an area and perhaps it would have been better to stay in Syria, despite the war.

The severe weather had made an impression on everybody, and almost all respondents brought it up in interviews, even though it was not a question, to start with. There was a tendency for groups from a more rural background to also adapt more easily to the weather. A Somali mother of eight children in the Norwegian case said: "*The weather is rough, but we just put jackets on.*" Through bodily experiences, she changes or adapts her practice, as referred to by Kinkaid, (2020), while, for others, especially the former city-dwellers, the wind and darkness were brought up as key arguments for why they had plans to leave for a bigger town or city. Their comments may illuminate their experience of spatial disorientation and bodily alienation that mark their everyday experience, when their "normative meanings and practices they know from home cannot be used" (Kinkaid, 2020:180). If they give up on these schemes or practices, they might end up being seen as part of the mass of uneducated refugees who, for example, are portrayed in the media.

Familiarization With Small Town Life

On the question of how the refugees used and perceived their new town and neighborhood, many of them felt that a good neighborhood was one that had lively street life and meeting places to go to, which the women especially missed in their new towns. Common in both cases is that the refugees find their new places of residence very quiet, and they compare them to their lively city backgrounds.

In the Norwegian case, those who came from larger cities reported that life in rural areas in Norway was too different from the daily life they were used to; in particular they found that the local people moved so slowly. The whole atmosphere in their new town felt quiet and slow, which was in opposition to how they experienced the pace of their own new everyday life, which was very busy, with commuting, language classes and job training. In the Danish case, respondents also said that they felt out of place when they went outside. There were very few people in the streets, and therefore they felt stared at when they moved around in bigger groups. In the Norwegian case, a woman reported that she stopped wearing her hijab in order to be more anonymous and not create attention as she moved around the town. The hijab marked her in a way that she wanted to avoid: an expression of embodied difference and otherness. In the Danish case, respondents placed in social housing expressed greater satisfaction with their homes and immediate neighborhoods, as buildings looked like the buildings other people lived in, and, secondly, because there were common spaces around the houses where they felt "allowed" to sit and meet neighbors and other refugees. Several respondents in both cases said that they found it difficult to "read" the towns, and they were unsure where you were "allowed" to sit down, as there were no obvious meeting places.

The busy, urban environment most refugees came from represented a strong contrast to the life they experience in

their Danish and Norwegian small towns, in relation to weather, pace of life and meeting places but also in relation to the number and formality of social relations. In both the Danish and Norwegian cases, most of the informants had developed relations with other refugees (if there were any) in the towns: relations that they valued very highly. They described that meeting up with others in the same situation as themselves finally made them feel connected and not standing out. They spoke the same language, which made them able to open up and find common understanding. The relations to other refugees very much added to their feeling of being home and gave "peace". These relations were initially more familiar and less formal than those they found in the small towns. Many of our informants mentioned that they felt unfamiliar with the new way of socializing by meeting in sports clubs and associations. They had noticed that the club houses and sports halls were the main meeting places and started to understand that it was here that social life played out, as they could not find many people in the streets. The women especially compared this way of socializing with the very different and informal way people met in the streets at home, where the children played in the streets after school. You could just go outside and immediately you would meet neighbors and friends you could talk with. On the contrary, in their new places of residence, they were expected to join associations and the children to do sports after school or to go to people's homes for play dates. Several said that they were too shy to join an association and start doing sport, and many said they were also too busy in their new daily life and were thus in a way "stopped", or at least their possibilities of social contacts were reduced, by their schemes and habits.

Social Life in Between the Formal and Informal

The initial habits and schemes of the respondents in inhabiting their neighborhood and interacting with people in a less formal way made them feel unfamiliar, different and out of place in their new towns, at first. They felt unfamiliar with joining associations but felt more comfortable joining various activities and events to welcome refugees, set up by local volunteers. In the early days, it was events with food, music and dance. Later on, various collections of clothes and furniture for the refugees took place then came language and homework cafes and later recurring social cafes. "*Here in Denmark, we drink coffee with the Danes every third week at the social cafe*", an older family father said with a smile, as this more organized way of socializing felt in contrast to the more informal way he met with the other refugees in the town. Even so, the social activities set up by local volunteers were in most cases popular among the refugees, in both the Norwegian and Danish cases. Most of the refugees spoke warmly about the people they met there. Those not taking part were mainly the younger single men.

Local activities seem important for the re-orientation of refugees after feelings of frustration and insecurity, dealing with busy everyday lives and dark winters. They represent important arenas for contact and interaction between the local population and the newcomers, as well as an entry point into the

local social life that is more accessible for them than taking part in the associational life. However, most often, in both cases, the local volunteers were retired people; they were therefore somewhat older than the majority of the refugees. Our interviews with single men revealed that this group especially stopped taking part in the social activities after some time, mainly because of the age difference. They said that they felt shy and sometimes uncomfortable when having to speak to the older local people. "*I am sure they are nice, but I feel shy because what should I say to an elderly Danish lady?*" The young men may well feel inferior, uneasy and unfamiliar in chatting with an old woman who lives a completely different life from theirs. It is easier if the volunteers talk about practical issues or can help with insecurities about jobs and education rather than just coffee drinking and chitchat. Other reasons refugees have for stopping taking part in activities included whether they felt they could get help with some of the challenges they faced. A young father in the Danish case found that there was too much "hygge" (Danish word for a homely and cheerful atmosphere) at the social café, so he did not feel like bringing up subjects like his wife's depression and his efforts to raise money to start up his own shop. In both the Danish and Norwegian cases, it was obvious that the social cafes whose volunteers had a network and a background in social work or teaching ran very professional activities for refugees. Here, they helped the refugees with legal aid and contact with the municipality, as well as advice on job finding, education and family reunification, whereas, in towns with mainly retired volunteers, the café activities were more for "hygge" and drinking coffee.

In both the Danish and Norwegian cases, younger locals also took part in the first activities for refugees, such as communal dinners and gatherings. In many cases, they dropped out after a while, mainly because of busy everyday lives but also because they found the responsibility too great to take on, as the refugees struggled with many and also complex matters in their daily life. As one Danish local volunteer said, "*It is much easier to mobilize younger people for collections and casual social activities than having to feel responsible for whether a refugee gets reunited with his family or to help out with jobs.*"

Experiencing the Rural Context (Differently)

In the Danish case, it was very much the housing situation that refugees experienced as challenging. They were mainly accommodated in different "left-over" housing stock, such as kindergartens or nursing homes no longer in use. In the Norwegian case, the availability also of family oriented housing seemed greater, as people were to a larger degree settled in ordinary houses, but many found that the houses were in a bad condition. In the Danish case, being placed in left-over housing gave several of the refugees a feeling of their situation being temporary and therefore insecure. Much of the available housing, like left-over nursing homes, was best suited to the settlement of single people, as it was made up of single rooms. If a refugee was then reunited with his family, the municipality was required to find them a bigger home, which often meant that they had to leave the small town because there was no more suitably sized cheap rented housing available. A local Danish

volunteer said: "*Our old nursing home has become a ghetto for those who cannot afford to move on, and it is a pity. Families find it easier here, but we have no housing for them.*" Therefore, most families had to leave, even those that had built social relations and had grown to like living in the town.

Most of the single people would like to move to bigger towns or cities for education and jobs; however, most in this group had no funds or contacts in the cities that could help them out with a place to live and a job. In the Danish case, it was especially the single men who would like to leave for better job opportunities. In Norway, there were also several women with children who were eager to move, in order to have the possibility of higher education. The refugees are free to move, even before the introductory years are over, but then they must pay deposits and moving expenses themselves and also find a place that they can afford, making it almost impossible for them.

In both cases, it was difficult and expensive to move, but many reported they had to, in order to find jobs and especially education. So, the distinction raised earlier between former city-dwellers and rural residents is also an important marker for those who feel they have to leave. Refugees with higher aspirations and education found it difficult to become familiar with and feel at home in the small town; even the weather was felt to be more of an issue for this group. Several of the refugees with higher education, particularly from Syria, could not get their academic degrees accepted for jobs they were qualified for and would have to undertake further education. However, as there were no higher educational possibilities where they were settled and commuting to places that had higher education was very expensive and too far away, moving away would be the only way to "make a life" in their new country. In the Norwegian case, most had to travel very long distances for education, even to the capital of Norway, Oslo, to take university courses that were relevant to their educational background. The only solution was to move and settle down in a new place again. Thus, the structural limitations- the distances, the housing and the lack of education possibilities- were very present in the refugees' everyday life, often making them feel frustrated and that they were only in these areas on a temporary basis.

DISCUSSION

In the introduction to this paper, we referred to the debate on whether refugees should be settled in rural areas, and there is no simple answer. The empirical findings in our studies show that there are several "moments of disorientation" when settled in the Nordic rural environment. According to Simonsen, (2012), migration could be described as a process of both disorientation and reorientation, as the bodies both "moved away" and "arrived". On arrival in the Nordic rural areas, there are many situations which the refugees do not know how to navigate, and many of their daily matters are in the hands of others. The adult refugees have very busy everyday lives, filled with language classes and job training and commuting outside the local area for most of the day. When they are finally back in the new rural place of residence, they find few people in

the streets and are unsure where they are "allowed" to meet. The dark winter days, filled with rain and snow, make them want to stay indoors. These different moments in their new everyday lives evoke various feelings and sensory experiences like confusion, frustration, stress and insecurity.

The "physical" rural area, in the sense of limited outdoor public spaces, can make the towns difficult to "read" and inhabit for the refugees. In the literature on refugees in rural areas, there are some studies describing the lack of physical meeting places and how this hampers the possibility to establish local social relations between refuges and locals. The lack of physical meeting places limits the performance of everyday practices like shopping and taking children to school, which are important for developing a feeling of belonging and familiarity (Brekke, 2015; Feist et al., 2015; Nørregaard, 2018). In our study, the physical surroundings are compared by the respondents to the lively and informal city life at home. The small-town life and layout is unfamiliar, and the respondents can feel "exposed" when they move around in bigger groups. However, the physical rural environment is more than this, as Ingold (2010) says. The weather is present in the lives of the newly settled refugees. The "air", in the form of wind, darkness and rain, evokes experiences and feelings that can be unsettling and challenging, just as other everyday meetings with commuter cards and housing matters can be. The Nordic weather, especially in Northern Norway, is a very challenging feature in the lives of the refugees. The weather and darkness can stir up senses and feelings of loneliness and insecurity. The body certainly walks, breathes, feels and knows in the weather world. When it comes to the phenomenology of practices, the way the rural areas are experienced from within shows surprisingly many similarities, when it comes to the experiences of transport and communication, surroundings, social relations and even the weather.

It is more across different groups of refugees that the weather and the rural setting are experienced differently. The former city-dwellers, with higher levels of education and job aspirations, find the small-town residency a temporary place on their way toward a better life with more possibilities in the city, and they are more resistant to changing their spatial practice and habits. The structural conditions of a rural setting very much shape the everyday lives of refugees in the first years, when they do not have a car or the financial capacity to buy their own house.

Living in small town presents many of the same challenges for refugees as for Danes and Norwegians. Many local young people leave rural areas for education and more possibilities but structural factors might be even more difficult to overcome when living on refugee benefits and when one is unfamiliar with the "vibrant" but somehow hidden and formal small town civic life. As referred to in the introduction, the limiting structural factors, like lack of jobs, housing and social services, are very much brought forward as difficult in the lives of refugees in rural areas (Wren, 2003; McAreavey and Argent, 2018; Woods, 2018). The rural setting is difficult to adapt to but some refugees might adapt better if they do not have aspirations for city living and higher education.

Our study shows that, when people and their "bodies" cannot use acquired schemes and habits, they can feel "exposed",

constrained and out of place, which are all examples of Kinkaid, (2020) "*differences formed through lived practice*". Kinkaid, (2020) used the term "contradictions of space" when people cannot practice space in a way that they are familiar with and where the relation between the subject and the milieu fails to cohere. Such experiences can result in both spatial and social disorientation, "*As the normative meanings and practices they know from home cannot be used*" (Kinkaid, 2020:180). In our material, we find few respondents actually having been "stopped" in their everyday spaces, as Simonsen, (2012) sees in nightlife, but most respondents definitely have their possibilities reduced, feel strange, exposed, looked at or out of place. Their "visibility" and the process of "othering" is more subtle and set in their comparing themselves to what is done around them and sometimes modifying their spatial practice accordingly. The woman that stopped wearing her hijab is the most explicit example of adjusting regarding visibility. The hijab was an expression of embodied difference, as it marked her in a way that she wanted to avoid. Most refugees notice that they live in different houses from those of the locals around them, have no car, travel by public transport, unlike local adults, etc.: all conditions that they cannot do much about. To get a driving license is a way out, but it is expensive and time-consuming, especially if the local driving instructor "stops" people by not wanting to drive with foreigners. We do not know the reason for the driving instructor not driving with foreigners. It might be the language, or it might be racism, but no matter what it exacerbates the problem of long commuting hours for the respondents and "stops" those already involved in many daily trips to bring children back and forth. The respondents also feel unsure about their spatial practice of inhabiting their new town of residence, as mentioned above. How should they move around and engage socially with the locals? If they live in social housing with public meeting places and can meet at events for refugees rather than at sports, they feel more at ease.

The best solutions for the many situations and feelings of not knowing what to do and how to find out seems to be social relations with other refugees and the local community. The experiences and feelings Simonsen pointed to a feeling of meaning and belonging, feeling of home, familiarity and orientation and of making the space habitable–can be spurred by socializing, especially with other refugees. Socializing with other refugees is highly valued and evokes feelings of familiarity. Feelings of both shyness and unfamiliarity characterize the social meetings between the refugees and the local community at the beginning. The way people meet in sports clubs and associations feels strange and formal, whereas the activities set up for refugees by local people seem more accessible. Here, they can get advice and ask for help without feeling bad, but it is not in all towns that the social atmosphere encourages them to get help with more challenging matters.

Recent literature on the local communities' role in migrant integration is two-sided. If they are not active and welcoming, it is a factor that could make immigrants leave (Skaptadóttir and Wojtynska, 2008; Johansen, 2018; Woods, 2018), and if they are too active, they can end up holding on to refugees that might have better opportunities elsewhere (McAreavey and Argent, 2018; Woods, 2018). Studies from Nordic rural areas point to the fact that interaction with the host community is key to a feeling of attachment and belonging, but establishing this interaction can be challenging (Herslund, 2021). Studies of unaccompanied young refugees in Sweden and Norway have shown that limited interaction with local youth leads to a lack of commitment among young refugees (Brekke, 2015; Wernesjö, 2015). The same can be found in studies on labor migrants in fishing and farm villages, where limited interaction with the local population makes this group feel less attached to their new residence (Skaptadóttir and Wojtynska, 2008; Aure et al., 2018). Scholars have also pointed out that relations with and proximity to other migrants are important in the feeling of belonging (Larsen, 2011). They can act as mediators between newly arrived refugees and the host society and ameliorate the drawbacks of rural residency, like limited social services and sparse economic opportunities (Larsen, 2011).

In our cases, the local communities have all been active, but often it is in drinking coffee or practical matters, whereas it can be harder to mobilize people to help out with more difficult matters. In addition, the local community cannot solve all problems. They can help ameliorate some of the obstacles of being settled in a rural town, by helping out with transport, but they cannot change the limited amount of cheap rented accommodation characterizing rural towns, nor can they change the darkness and wind that are so very different from where the refugees come from.

The question is, of course, whether one can talk about "Nordic" rural areas as one entity. It is widely known that rural areas can be very different, and rural areas in a small country like Denmark and a large and much more northern country like Northern Norway definitely present very different conditions. Especially, we have seen how distances in Northern Norway pose many difficulties for refugees in their daily life. This is to a lesser extent the case in Denmark, but even here there are challenges, when one does not have a car like everyone else. What surprised us was how the weather was experienced as harsh and very intimidating in both countries by refugees. Coming to small places in northern Europe, from urban areas and places in the Middle East with heat and Sun, represents great changes. It is not surprising that the refugees struggle, living in such different weather conditions. In Northern Norway, there are a couple of months where the Sun is above the horizon. The polar night and the winter can be hard, even for people who have lived there all their lives.

CONCLUSION

This paper is based on empirical data gathered in two different projects, studying refugees settled in rural areas in the north of Norway and in Denmark. Inspired by the phenomenology of practices (Simonsen, 2012), which situates practical, embodied consciousness in the world, we asked the questions: When arriving in Nordic rural areas, how is space (the new town of

residence) experienced, what experiences result in feelings of belonging and familiarity, and what experiences spur feelings of disorientation?

Despite great differences in geography and climate across the two cases, the informants in our studies encounter many of the same challenges to do with the rural environment: the long distances and limited public transport, few meeting places, different behavioral norms, unfamiliar weather conditions and more formal social interactions, etc. Being settled in Nordic rural areas has produced moments of contradictions, where the relation between the subject and the milieu has failed to cohere: situations of not knowing how to navigate. Being in a situation where many daily matters were in the hands of others also created disorientation and demanded reorientation. Another common factor in the lives of the families and young people settled in both Norway and Denmark was the busyness of their everyday lives. The necessity to commute outside the local area most of the day, in order to participate in the introductory program, having work practice, take driving lessons, etc., was rather time-consuming. Many of the informants also expressed feelings of disorientation, since there were so few people out in the streets.

This paper has pointed out that refugees settled in rural Norway and Denmark can experience many similar challenges. Nevertheless, there is an important difference among those with refugee status in both the north of Norway and the south of Denmark. The former city-dwellers, with higher levels of education and job aspirations, find the small-town residency difficult in both cases, whereas refugees with rural backgrounds more easily feel at home. Still, such differences seemed to be played down, in encounters with both local people and others with a refugee background.

Taking part in the introductory program with others in the same situation, speaking a "foreign" language, living in particular houses and being unfamiliar with local culture and habits created important boundaries and experiences of familiarity among the refugees. At the beginning of the settlement phase, experiences of insecurity, shyness and unfamiliarity and not knowing how to

practice space appropriately made it difficult to getting to know local inhabitants. It was difficult to find and approach locals, in both the small town informal local arenas and the more formal associational life and sports clubs. Most of the encounters between newcomers and local people took place at activities set up especially for refugees. Many of our informants expressed great gratitude for the locals engaging in such activities, as these were more accessible ways into the local community. However, these activities also needed to address the many challenges the refugees experienced in their daily life. If they are only centered around "hygge" and drinking coffee, they lose out and might not be prioritized by the refugees, as they have busy everyday lives. Encounters with the Nordic rural areas created moments of disorientation and the experiences and feelings that Simonsen, (2012) points to; feelings of meaning and belonging are mainly spurred by socializing, especially with other refugees in the same situation but also by taking part in local voluntary activities, helping out with everyday life challenges.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The article include original contributions. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants follow the codes of conduct at the University of Copenhagen and the Arctic University of Norway.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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Against Single Stories of 'Left Behind' and 'Triple Win': On Agricultural Care Chains and the Permanent Subsistence Crisis

Dina Bolokan *

Department of Social Sciences, Centre for Gender Studies, University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland

The single story of Moldova as the "country without parents" is unsettling. While it is true that villages in Moldova, as in other post-Soviet regions and global peripheries, are affected by intensive outmigration and labor mobility, the image is incomplete. In this article, I propose a different telling of this story: one that looks at and challenges the structural power relations visible in people's lives in rural Moldova. It is a telling that points to the overall subsistence crisis in Europe and the relationship between neocolonial entanglements and agricultural care chains. As such, this article aims to bring together reflections on labor migration, well-being in rural areas and the global care economy while seeking to decolonize subsistence production and the abolition of the international division of (re)productive labor.

Keywords: labor migration, international division of reproductive labor, agricultural care chains, Moldova, well-being, subsistence crisis, decolonization, post-Soviet studies

PROLOG

The photo (**Figure 1**) looks like a field in Italy. It could also be in Germany or Switzerland or England or the Netherlands. A few people are harvesting. Are they all workers from abroad? Are they parents? This is what the book tells us. "A country without parents" is a photo series of Moldovan workers in Italy. It could be a story about illegalized agricultural workers, as Moldova is not part of the European Union so people are not actually allowed to work in Italy, Germany or anywhere else in the European Union. Or it could be about how people from Moldova can obtain Romanian citizenship and work legally if they prove that their ancestors lived on the territory of great Romania before the soviets colonized Moldova. Most people would not call this colonization, but I do, and some others in Moldova do too. Newspapers in wealthy countries like to talk about these poor regions in Europe. There is a discourse in society about people leaving children with their grandparents in their home countries. They call it the 'left behind children phenomena'. In fact, many people in western Europe like to talk about the 'poor'. They also like to help people in poor countries, especially when it involves children. It makes them feel better to do so or to buy organic food. But these people find it offensive if somebody talks about how they profit from those 'poor' people. How those people are 'poor' so 'we' can be rich. This is not to be questioned, and responsibility is left to politicians, if to anyone at all.

Back to the photo...

One woman is wiping away her sweat. Is it because it's hot and the sweat is dripping down and stinging her eyes? Maybe it's not the sweat she is trying to wipe away but her invasive thoughts. Is her fatigue because her child just called to say that grandmother is sick and she should come home to take care of both of them? Is it because she is physically tired? Tired of the back and forth from Moldova to Italy every couple

FIGURE 1 | From the series Land ohne Eltern (land without parents). Photo Andrea Diefenbach (2012).

of months? Or tired because she cannot go back and see her loved ones because of her legal status? Is it because she realizes that after working the whole summer on the field she is still not able to send back money, as living in Italy is expensive, and she has started to ask herself what she is still doing here, and if going back is better or worse. Or maybe it's because the caporale takes away all the money she earns so she has nothing left after paying for accommodation and food. Is it because she heard about the protests in the nearby village of Rosarno after the racist attacks on workers? Is it because she is scared of what this could mean for her? Of how she, who is not Italian but could be read as such, could somehow be affected by all of this?

So maybe she *is* wiping away her thoughts. Maybe she is not sure how to deal with it. She has her own issues with people who receive more money than she does. *Am I also racist?* she might be thinking to herself. She feels sorry for them but does not protest when others make strange comments about the racist attacks. She does want to support the uprizing workers, but would she then lose her job?

FIGURE 2 | From the series Land ohne Eltern (land without parents). Photo Andrea Diefenbach (2012).

FIGURE 3 | From the series Land ohne Eltern (land without parents). Photo Andrea Diefenbach (2012).

Lost again.

Maybe her feebleness today is because a caporale offered her a deal for sex instead of paying him to bring her to the field and back every day. Or is it because her husband got drunk last night, saying he cannot stand the work anymore, that he's sick of still not earning enough and not being a 'proper' husband, a 'real man' who is capable of feeding the family? Is it because he hit her and excused himself at the same moment, promising not to do it again? Is she wondering if this was really the last time, because it was certainly not the first. Probably it's because she had a great evening last night, laughing and dancing the whole night and now she is tired as she begins her 12-h workday in the field. Or is it because she regrets asking to work in the hot field with the men instead of in the packing hall with the other women, hoping that the change of working position and rhythm would take away her pain? Or does she feel the weight of this all at once? She feels like she is carrying the whole world on her shoulders and life is a never-ending drama with no alternatives in sight. That's why she has been doing this damn job for years while dreaming of working in her village's kindergarten again or of finally bringing her children and parents to settle down in Italy.

Why not challenging assumptions? Why not following multiple complexities?

INTRODUCTION

"Once in a village that is burning
because a village is always somewhere burning.
And if you do not look because it is not your village it is still your village (…)"
    — *Elana Bell (in "Your Village", Eyes, Stones 2012).*

This article looks at the experiences of people from rural Moldova[1] aiming to reflect on the current subsistence crisis.

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[1]While I mostly refer to Moldova, it should be pointed out here that Transnistria is neither excluded nor analyzed separately within this article.

Villages that are affected by outmigration are thereby understood as crucial starting points of reflection to counter various single stories within this context. "From the Black Sea to the Adriatic, the issue of falling population numbers is a drama. In Moldova, it is a trauma" (Judah, 2020). Indeed, what Tim Judah is pointing out is visible in the depopulated villages of rural Moldova and in other rural regions in post-Soviet countries. Together with Ukraine, Moldova is ranked as the poorest country in Europe, a label that many are familiar with. Within this context, many people joined the global economy, leading to a mass exodus. Moldova is indeed badly affected: today's population is a third of what it was thirty years ago. This reality is taken up in media and documentaries as a one-sided story where Moldova is referred to as the "land without parents" (Flamminio, 2011; Diefenbach, 2012, see **Figures 2**, **3**) or the 'left-behind children country' (BBC, 2011; Financial Times, 2015).

Chimamanda Adichie has pointed to the danger of a single story as it "creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." According to Adichie, this is where power is situated, it "is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person." The danger lies in the consequences of such a single story as it "robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar" (Adichie, 2009). This one specific narrative around Moldova carries all this and a further consequence: it compromises already marginalized communities while discursively placing the blame on those who are structurally most affected by the current care crisis—that are at the end of care chains. The single story of the 'left behind children country' does not look into structural power relations and thereby invisibilizes uneven access to and distribution of care capacities. The danger lies in the fact that it contributes to the acceptance of policies that further push for the maintenance of what Spivak refers to as sustainable underdevelopment (2012) and power relations based on colonial continuities.

Nicoleta Esinencu was one of the first authors in Moldova to publicly challenge structural power relations from within Moldova, by destroying the one-dimensional image and perspectives of 'the good life' in Europe, thereby challenging another single story. Through her theater play "FUCK YOU, Eu.Ro.Pa!" Esinencu (2005) criticizes the European Union for the economic gap between the poor and rich. This was a direct frontal attack that was not welcomed by the authorities in Moldova or Romania and led to partial censorship. Esinencu also deconstructed the images circulating in western media that portray people as victims. At the same time, she spoke to her fellow citizens, criticizing that "people passively accepted communism, and then passively accepted capitalism" (di Mauro, 2014, 4). Di Mauro argues that in doing so Esinencu "tries to give voice not only to Moldovans 'lost' in a difficult transition since 1989, but also to all those societies which do not recognize themselves in the mechanisms of capitalism." (ibid. 6).

While it has been stated that Moldova is facing a mass outmigration, these labor movements are better characterized by hypermobility in which people regularly commute between Moldova and a place abroad to perform wage labor (Bolokan, 2021). This mobility regime has been implemented into a 'circular migration' policy that is referred to as a win-win-win solution. This development strategy is the basis for bilateral agreements between the European Union's member states and countries outside the European Union that aim to recruit workers for a limited amount of time, thereby revealing the colonial patterns incorporated in post-Soviet and neocolonial labor regimes (Bolokan, 2020). One of the first agreements was with Moldova, where this type of recruitment has become institutionalized and where non-/governmental organizations and further stakeholders control and manage these transnational flows. In the circular migration narrative, it is said that everybody wins: the wealthier countries facing labor shortages, the poorer countries facing a precarious economy and the affected communities, as they no longer have to face brain and care drains since relatives working abroad come back regularly. By looking into testimonies of people living in Moldova that have relatives working in the European Union, I propose to add layers also to this single story represented by the EU's 'triple win' narrative as a solution to the 'land without parents' problem.

As this special issue seeks to think about well-being in rural areas in the context of labor migration, I argue that this question can be addressed best if we take "the lives and interests of marginalized communities" as starting points of reflection (Mohanty, 2003, 231), access structural understandings and reevaluate the use of care as a concept. I nurture this understanding from the implications of the new international division of (re)productive labor and struggles within the global care economy. I bring rural care into this discussion to focus on a blind spot in current reflections. Many studies have pointed out that the global care economy and transnational labor migration are accompanied by care chains (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002; Parreñas, 2005; Lutz and Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2012, among others). Care, from a rural subsistence class perspective comprises of caring for and with humans, animals, plants and the soil. For most agricultural workers and for most people worldwide, care is not limited to humans only. Therefore, the care concept, which has focused on human to human relations only, carries an inherent exclusive urban class perspective. I argue that dominant understandings of what care encompasses have therefore been insufficient to grasp the realities of migrating (agricultural) workers and their communities from rural regions. Broadening the understanding of care and care chains can hence shed new light on the current care crisis that becomes manifold in the *subsistence crisis*.

To build this argument, I first trace back the discussions around care from a global perspective and then argue for the need to situate rural caring relations. I then reflect on my methodological and theoretical framework of mapping *rural topographies of care* to present testimonies of people in rural Moldova that live out of agricultural subsistence production and have family members working abroad. In doing so, I diversify the picture of the single story of the 'left behind' as well as the single story of the EU's 'triple win' solution by mapping personal coping strategies and structural challenges in post-Soviet Moldova. This

analysis reveals *landscapes of wounds* within the context of an overall subsistence crisis that is embedded within global power relations. In the end, I propose a discussion on healing within a transnational perspective on abolition.

LITERATURE REVIEW: CARE WORK, THE GLOBAL CARE ECONOMY AND CARE CHAINS

In the last two decades, the term care has emerged as an important analytical tool in many social science fields. This can be seen as a product of various feminist interventions, such as the institutionalization of women and gender studies and struggles around unpaid housework in the 1970s. These interventions became known on an international level as the 'housework debate' (Hausarbeitdebatte) with campaigns on wages for housework (see Wages for Housework Committees, Lotta Feminista). In this context, committees such as one in London, called for a broader perspective: "Women do the work of producing and reproducing the entire workforce at home, on the land and in the community, in churches, schools and community groups, through voluntary labor and unwaged subsistence farming [...] We are a network of Black/Third World women claiming reparations for all our unwaged work including slavery, imperialism and neo-colonialism." In their understanding, care work encompassed unwaged subsistence farming, health care, voluntary labor and hence reached far beyond the understanding of housework. These marginalized interventions on wages for housework that fundamentally connected to unwaged work in the context of slavery and neocolonialism aimed for an inclusive perspective on liberation in order to "free the whole planet and win liberation for all working people, waged and unwaged" (The International Wages for Housework Campaign, 2020). In this context, the concept of self-care has become influential. It has been discussed broadly since the 80s in Black and queer feminist circles as a tool for survival. For Audre Lorde, this means: "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." (Lorde, 1988, 205). So, when a person is marginalized in society, self-care is an act of resistance. This understanding stands in profound opposition to today's dominant understandings of self-care (read: self-optimization) in the context of the neoliberal post-welfare states. Radical self-care hence became a crucial point of reference for organizing (for current examples see The Icarus Project, GirlTrek health movement and Radical/Queer/BIPoC Herbalism Networks, among others and see Ahmed, 2014; Richardson, 2018; Hobart and Kneese, 2020).

The so-called integration of women into the labor market did co-occur with the growth of the global care economy (Yeates, 2004). And the gendered division of labor developed along with the nuclear family and the development of the bourgeoisie (Maihofer, 1995), resulting in housework being put on women and wage labor being put on men. This slowly became intertwined with gendered labor regimes, where increasingly women from poorer regions worked in the households of wealthier families so that wealthier women could perform wage labor. The migrating women would then often delegate their care responsibilities, paid or unpaid, to other women in their countries of origin, leading to a redistribution of inequalities that has been problematized: "At both ends of the migratory stream, they have not been able to negotiate directly with male counterparts for a fairer division of household work but instead have had to rely on their race and/or class privilege by participating in the transnational transfer of gender constraints to less-privileged women." (Parreñas, 2000, 577). The international division of reproductive labor (Parreñas, 2000) and the global care economy are therefore accompanied by global care chains (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002) leading to nanny chains (Hochschild, 2000) and care drains (Parreñas, 2005; Lutz and Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2012) and going hand in hand with ethnicized labor relations (Parreñas, 2001) and care extraction (Wichterich, 2019). Contributions have argued that care capacities are accumulated in the so-called Global North and lacking in the Global South (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002). The new division of domestic labor (Lutz, 2011) has also been understood as something that carries historical continuities of exploitation. Therefore, "colonial ties are often significant in understanding why GCC [global care chains] have emerged and the form in which they developed." (Yeates, 2012, 141).

Further research reflected on transnational (nuclear) families, focusing on the challenges and opportunities of transnational motherhood and fatherhood and the effects on children (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Dreby, 2007; Mazzucato and Schans, 2011; Ducu, 2018) as well as changing gender relations within transnational care arrangements (Lutz and Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2016) and the possibilities and difficulties of parenting at a distance through mobile phones and new technologies (Madianou and Miller, 2011; Nedelcu and Wyss, 2016). The important contribution of the remaining grandparents was also highlighted, while at the same time pointing to the constituting role of migrating grandmothers in the global care economy and in post-Soviet nation-state building (Solari, 2017). Following the care chain approach, it has been made visible how these chains in Europe reach, for example, from Ukraine to Poland and from Poland to Germany (Lutz and Palenga-Möllenbeck, 2010, 2011). While it has been stated that these chains are always in flux (Murphy, 2014, 192) and have therefore different spatial and temporal characteristics, the concept has so far not been discussed regarding rural to rural/urban labor migration. Suggestions have been made on how to further deepen the analysis of global care chains such as looking at additional occupations and more countries worldwide (Yeates, 2012, 147) and considering the elderly (Escrivá, 2005, 14). But is has also become clear that "it is insufficient simply to gather more empirical data from diverse locations; rather, we need to take on board what these different localities can contribute to questions and expanding our conceptualizations and theorizations." (Raghuram, 2012, 160).

I conclude that reflections on care, the global care economy and resulting care chains have produced a broadly resonant discussion in the social sciences and society. However, they have also led to a narrow understanding of the care (chains). As a result (I) care has hardly been understood as the production of life in the broadest sense

(II) discussions of transnational care relations have lost their emphasis on the historical weight of colonialism and exploitation in a global, patriarchal and neocolonial world and (III) the important notion of care as self-care and as a practice of resistance for marginalized communities got lost. As a consequence, the specific challenges of those workers and their communities that come from rural areas and are involved in subsistence agriculture, was overlooked. I hence propose 1) to reflect on care from an epistemological as broad as possible but socioeconomic embedded and place-based perspective, thereby deconstructing the binary-western-patriarchal-colonial understanding of care and 2) to reevaluate the notion of care chains in the context of migrating agricultural workers from rural Moldova, thereby 3) developing an *intersectional perspective on care*, that also opposes scientific single stories such as disciplinary thinking that narrow theoretical and empirical approaches. I hence open a multidimensional discussion on caring relations that beyond multiple empirical and epistemological perspectives on rural Moldova also allow for further theoretical implications on the global care economy, the crises of (re) production and on gender theory.

SITUATING CARE (CHAINS) AS AGRICULTURAL CARE (CHAINS)

This article is concerned with what happens at the end of the care chains in Moldova, as the majority of the rural working population undertakes wage labor abroad. I already elaborated on what *hypermobility* means for those that leave regularly to work in Europe's agricultural and agrifood sectors (Bolokan, 2021). Here I follow up on these reflections while looking into what *hypermobility* and migration mean for those that remain and take care of subsistence production. What are the challenges and involved global power relations in rural Moldova and how do people cope with being at the end of care chains? In this section I will reflect on the epistemological dimensions of care and the socioeconomic dimension of care work under capitalism in order to situate care chains and rethink care in the context of translocal rural to rural labor mobility and migration.

Epistemological Approximation

In the social sciences today, care is often referred to as a "social and emotional practice that does not necessarily need to be defined in relation to the spheres of work but rather entails the capacity to make, shape, and be made by social bonds" (Alber and Drotbohn, 2015, 2). Care, as referred to in the social sciences, therefore carries a dimension of interpersonal relationships (relationships to other persons). Therefore care is mostly referred to as caring for (including tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing, listening and healing) and caring about (working on the relationship between people and the development of their bonds) (Yeates, 2012, 138 referring to Lynch and McLaughlin, 1995, 256–257). I argue that the emergence of care as a concept goes back to the distinction of people in industrialized societies as male breadwinners and female nurturers. These gendered and hierarchical oppositions have not only displaced people from their subsistence (primitive/

origin accumulation) and divided human tasks into paid wage labor and unpaid care work, they have also led to a definition of care from a human centered perspective as something that people do to each other. Under this logic, people are either care receivers or care givers. *I argue that the dominant perception of care is fundamentally linked to a western, patriarchal and urban biased understanding of relating to and taking responsibility for the world.* I further argue that this human centered understanding of care stands in the tradition of binary thinking. As a consequence 1) it detaches human animals and their well-being from 'the rest' and hierarchizes relations. 2) This hierarchization again builds the condition to devaluate entities that are not human animals and belong to 'the rest'. This 'rest' is put as being closer to 'nature', the very logic that racializes people and degrades women, non-binary persons such as all people that are not being identified as the white, abled, heterosexual, Christian, cis man. Historically this logic developed along the justification to exploit 'nature' and enslave people, a process that not only did harm to the colonized and their territories but came back to the colonizers and to Europe (see oppression of 'nature'—internal as well as external—and intrahuman forms of domination and oppression/connection between domination of nature and domination of humans, in Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947). Toni Morrison described it as follows: "(…) They had to dehumanize, not just the slaves but themselves. They had to reconstruct everything in order to make the system appear true." (Morrison in Gilroy, 1993, 178). This led to inner colonization in Europe (Ha, 2008) and to "'an arc' of colonialism-nationalism-fascism" (Aikens et al., 2019, 9). It also went hand in hand with a *devaluation of the rural and subsistence production*, that was seen as the non-modern and backward side of society. At the same time, caring and being responsible for was only understood within the relations of the nuclear family (the caring mother), wage labor relations (the caring patron) and the nation (the caring state for its citizens). I argue, that the single story of Moldova as "the country without parents" where we are left with a single narrative of relations and responsibilities, also carries a binary thinking such as a colonial understanding of care. Hence to deconstruct the concept of care and to rethink caring relations, opens the space for multiple narratives and stories along with nuanced perspectives on care and caring relations in Moldova and beyond.

Indigenous sciences (Snively and Williams, 2016) and Indigenous knowledge systems (Tippins et al., 2010) have been referred to as Indigenous ways of living in nature (Aikenhead and Ogawa, 2007). This implies a reference system where the concept of living cannot be disconnected from 'nature'. Human animals are a part of this, which contradicts the western dichotomous understanding of nature vs. humans. These understandings thereby oppose further pairs such as nature vs. culture, biology vs. sociology, reproductive vs. productive and so on. Indigenous theorizing hence refers to "a world in which the multiplicity of living beings and objects are addressed as peers in constituting knowledge and world." (Sundberg, 2013, 42). As the word concept for care does not exist in all 'non-western' languages, it is not about applying *the* indigenous understanding of care to the European context (*the* overall understanding does not exist

anyway). Rather, I propose that care from a non-western and intersectional perspective cannot be disconnected from 'nature'. *Accordingly, I understand care first of all as reciprocity and circularity with and between all entities involved in constituting a relation.* In other words, "if care is to *move* a situation, those who care will be also moved by it" (de la Bellacasa, 2012, 206). This includes the idea that care does not only take place between humans but also between non-humans and other entities. It is therefore a complex dynamic that includes, but is not limited to, the articulating and percipience of needs or feelings.

This comes with many challenges: communication in caring relations is embedded in structures of power and domination and changing ontological limits of entities. It depends on who is able to communicate how and to whom and who is able to understand and receive what has been communicated and to interpret or act accordingly. In an epistemological sense, postcolonial thinkers have discussed the limits of understanding and the need to listen (Spivak, 1988), an important intervention that pushes those in more powerful positions to do their work in "learning to unlearn" (see decolonial thinking, Tlostanova and Mignolo, 2012). Further epistemological implications come with insights in interplant communications (for example Song et al., 2010) and ways of caring between species. A sage plant, for example, starts to activate its defense enzymes and genes when a damaged tobacco plant grows next to it. She understands the warning signals from the tobacco plant (Köchlin, 2020). Reading such caring mechanisms is challenging when the discussion returns to farming people and the impact on their agricultural caring relations; above all, it requires longitudinal and deep observation and transgenerational communication.

Socioeconomic Approximation: The Political Economy of (Re)productive Labor/ Care Work

Feminists in the 1970s and early 80s deepened reflections on what capitalist and socialist/communist economists have erased in their reconstruction of value production: mainly unpaid, invisibilized and unvalued labor that precedes and goes hand in hand with the production of goods and commodities. Reproductive work could be understood as the work necessary

**FIGURE 4 |** The Iceberg Model of Captitalist Patriarchal Economics (Mies & Bennhold-Thomsen 1999).

to produce and maintain humans, a kind of human labor that unlike domestic work also includes childbirth, raising children, and emotional care and attention. This division has been criticized, however. Why should only the production of goods and commodities be considered 'productive', and why not the 'production' of life and the maintenance of living processes? In contrast to Karl Marx[2] and following Rosa Luxemburg[3] (Mies and Bennhold-Thomsen, 1999, 30f), the subsistence theorists (also referred to as the Bielefelderinnen or The Bielefeld School) developed the Iceberg Model of Capitalist Patriarchal Economics (**Figure 4**) in order to map the invisible economy that produces value and is exploited under capitalism; it does so without dividing labor into productive and reproductive forms.

The outlined spheres of the invisible economy represent different areas of the externalization of costs that are treated under capitalism as free goods to be taken and appropriated. This immense volume of work bears the foundation of capitalist surplus-value. Meanwhile, subsistence peasant work, housework and so on are taken together under the term subsistence production:

"Subsistence production encompasses all work that is spent in the production and maintenance of life and also has this purpose. Thus the concept of subsistence production is in contrast to the production of goods and market value. In subsistence production the goal is 'life'. In the production of goods, the goal is money, which 'produces' more and more money, or the accumulation of capital. In this logic life is only kind of a side effect. It is typical of the capitalist industrial system that everything it wants to exploit for free is declared to be nature, a natural resource. This includes the domestic work of women as well as the work of small farmers in the Third World, but also the productivity of nature as a whole." (Mies and Bennhold-Thomsen, 1999).

Following this understanding, the term and concept of subsistence production contains the inseparable connection between domestic and housework as well as the agricultural subsistence that is the human and non-human life production. This includes almost all work beyond wage labor in the colonized and colonizing regions. All of these spheres are considered to be productive labor. Despite the appropriate and important criticism of the Bielefeld School (Attia, 1991; Glenn, 1992, 2; Baier, 2010, 76; Knittler, 2005, 90), I consider the Iceberg Model and the definition of subsistence production to be helpful for further theorizing the political economy of care work and agricultural work as belonging and as the invisible economy of surplus value under capitalism.

In the case of agricultural workers and their communities, caring relations have to be situated within the invisible economy

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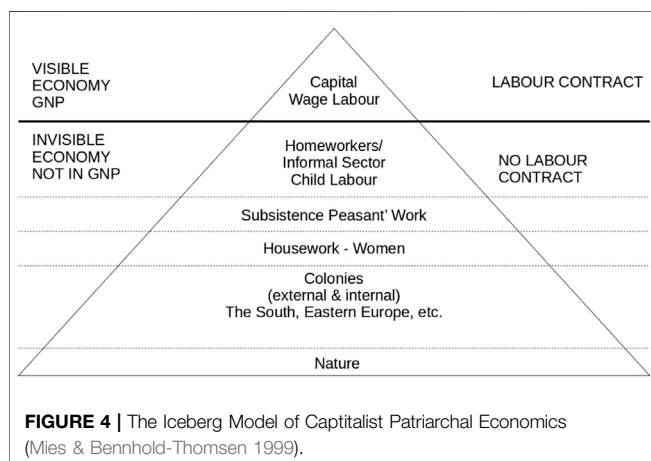
[2]As a reminder: Marx assumes that the 'success' (that is capital accumulation) of capitalism lies in the fact that it can use a resource, namely the *human labor force,* without having to spend as much value on it as it produces. This human labor force has been equated in theory and political practice to the heterosexual, white male worker in the factory.

[3]In turn, Rose Luxemburg (1913) in her theory of imperialism assumed that capitalism must always be imperialist in order to access new supply sources; that is, it must always incorporate non-capitalist areas and elements, and at that time, of course, this meant especially nature and unpaid work in and from the colonies.

and care has to be understood from a place-based perspective. Many people who work in the European agricultural sector operate as smallholders. While they harvest abroad or work in the food processing industry, other people take care of their social responsibilities toward friends, relatives and neighbors and toward their agricultural subsistence. This affects more than just interpersonal relationships. In the case of agricultural workers and their rural communities, it has an impact on them as smallholders. I, therefore, propose a widening of the perspective on care chains in the context of rural to rural labor mobility and migration by situating rural care chains, using *agricultural care chains* as an analytical framework. This understanding of agricultural work as care and the other way around is meaningful because it carries analogies. These analogies show us the concrete conditions of agricultural work that are defined by cycles of (re)production with their own diverse rhythms and dynamics. Furthermore in small-scale subsistence agriculture, the working spheres are not divided on a functional level but are *spatially interrelated*. Housework, care and agricultural care—that is, living, eating, cooking, feeding people, nurturing animals and looking after plants–take place on the same terrain. Taking this into considerations leads me to look into *rural topographies of care* in Moldova, thereby developing an intersectional perspective on the multiple complexities of rural challenges and perspectives.

DECOLONIAL LIFE COURSE APPROACH AND RURAL TOPOGRAPHIES OF CARE

This article focuses on what happens at the end of agricultural care chains thereby adding layers to the single story of "the left behind children country". I look into the challenges and coping strategies of the elder population[4] in rural Moldova, as their perspective is crucial to understanding the effects of labor mobility and migration on rural communities and rural spaces. Insights are based on longitudinal research on *hypermobility* in the agricultural sector in Europe that took place over nine years in the context of a *decolonial life course perspective* (Bolokan, 2021) and that weaves together a life course approach with global ethnography from a decolonial and queer feminist perspective. Through research of the effects of globalization on people's everyday lives, this approach asks to 1) situate people's life courses within the shared experiences of their communities and to identify the entangled local and global power relations that reveal continuities of colonial exploitation (in this case including the afterlives of Soviet rule), while 2) at the same time (re)searching for perspectives to decolonize oneself and the world.

The *decolonial life course approach* was enriched by personal experiences. I was born in Moldova but migrated to Germany in 1991. Many of my relatives in Moldova live on subsistence agriculture. Growing up I became sensitized toward understanding the overall changes in Moldova after the collapse of the Soviet Union. I regularly go to Moldova to

fulfill my care responsibilities toward my relatives. While going back and forth, I periodically meet people that work abroad. At the same time, following their biographies and those of their extended social networks developed into a life course perspective, that was not a disconnected and alienated research strategy, but as a supportive part of my own back and forth movements. Ultimately, it was also a personal coping strategy to meet my own translocal obligations and the demands that accompanied it, meanwhile my interactions with the extended communities had to go far beyond my wage labor in academia. So from the beginning searching for emancipatory perspectives on well-being, become and remain a constitutive part of my knowledge production.

Within this context, the vignettes below stem from biographical interviews and conversations with 22 smallholders that have family members that are temporary or permanently working in the European Union mainly in the agriculture sector or/and the care economy. I was able to meet these subsistence farmers through their relatives that work abroad and that I previously conducted interviews with (34). Others I came into contact with through the social networks of my own relatives and friends in Moldova. I met some of them several times over this long period. At times our contact would include living at their places or close by for a certain amount of time. Most of these conversations took part in rural Moldova and were multilingual, mainly in Russian and Romanian/Moldovan. The length of the talks and interviews ranged from 60 min to 3 h.

Because research on care chains has overlooked rural specificities, I chose to focus primarily on agricultural care. In some cases, longer interview passages will be integrated into the vignettes to give as much space as possible for people to tell their own histories and develop their own narratives–with as few omissions as possible–and to allow a broader context for interpretation than the one that is possible within this framed article. The people and the stories presented are selected in a way as to encompass the experiences, life trajectories and main topics of all 22 smallholders and show how challenges and coping strategies in rural Moldova cannot be disconnected from its post-Soviet past nor from its neocolonial present. This enables a mapping of *rural topographies of care* that are situated within post-Soviet entangled spaces and translocal labor mobility regimes. This mapping is a firs step toward opposing the single story. Using topographies as a tool allows a detailed description of multiple social dynamics as well as a description of rural Moldova, rural areas and agriculture. Following Cindi Katz, "Topographies allow us to look, not only at particular processes in place, but at the effects of their encounters with sedimented social relations of production and reproduction there. In other words, topographies are thoroughly material. They encompass the processes that produce landscapes as much as they do the landscapes themselves, making clear the social nature of nature and the material grounds of social life." (Katz, 2001, 720)

Thus, topography offers a method for examining the material effects of globalization that are found in social practices as well as inscribed in places themselves. Following Katz, this can be understood as a basis for countertopographies (ibid. 721ff).

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[4]I define the elder population as the age around retirement; the retirement age in Moldova for women is 57/58 years and 62/63 for men.

"One can imagine mapping places connected along a multitude of different contour lines, each marking a potential terrain of translocal politics. In other words, the political, theoretical, and methodological project I want to advance is one that constructs countertopographies linking different places analytically in order to both develop the contours of common struggles and imagine a different kind of practical response to problems confronting them." (ibid. 722ff).

In this understanding, identifying such contour lines and the involved translocal politics allow for mapping geographical imagination and countertopographies that are grounded in "multiple situated knowledges" (ibid. 723ff). It hence connects a variety of places affected by similar social phenomena and structural power relations while bringing together a variety of situated experiences and of struggle in order to deepen resistance practices. My methodological proposition here is to follow agricultural care chains and to describe rural topographies of care where people find themselves at the end of these chains and to look for such contour lines.

AT THE END OF AGRICULTURAL CARE CHAINS: CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

I have already reflected on the inner European recruitment chains of workers toward Eastern Europe within the agricultural and agrifood sectors. They generally reach from wealthier European countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, England and Denmark to Poland and Romania. Within this context, Poland is one of the most important so called sending *and* receiving countries. As a result, the recruitment of workers from Poland to practically all wealthier European countries comes along with *recruitment chains* that involve workers from Ukraine and Moldova in the context of *post-Soviet and neocolonial agricultural labor regimes* (Bolokan, 2020). Hence Moldova finds itself at the end of recruitment chains within the broader labor market. What the 'left behind children country' discourse is hinting toward is this precarious situation of a mass exodus, especially in rural Moldova, thereby producing a single story. However, in reality, these agricultural care chains end due to mass outmigration and hypermobility within whole communities, so different coping strategies arise to maintain subsistence production. In Moldova, around 70% of the population lives from agriculture (Mocreac, 2018, 7), mainly as subsistence farmers. The following life stories allow insight into people's thoughts, decisions and struggles from a biographical perspective. These life stories present counterstories to the narrative of the 'country without parents' and undermine the one-dimensional single story. The people I interviewed are connected by similar situations, as they all have relatives working abroad, mainly in the agricultural and agrifood sectors. Whereas ten years ago almost every household had somebody working or living abroad also supporting the family, these days, most of the members, especially in the younger generations, have some temporary wage labor experiences or even live and work periodically or permanently abroad. Out of the 22 smallholders I talked to, I focus on four farms and six people, so I choose to look

into only a few lives to give deeper insights into trajectories and experiences. These experiences stand for themselves but have strong parallels to the other smallholders I talked to. Therefore they are embedded within shared experiences in communities that are affected by hypermobility and mass outmigration.

In order to better understand the agrarian structure and the social power relations in the villages and to situate the experiences below, it is necessary to discuss the *lider system*. I refer to lider as a system, as nearly every village in Moldova has one or more such liders. These *liders* (Romanian/Moldavian word for leader) form a kind of rural upper class that owns machinery and can therefore work the land and can relate to more powerful social networks that allow them to sell their products. After the Soviet Union ended and in the process of decollectivization, the distribution and privatization of land and infrastructure was organized in this way. All the land that belonged to the kolkhoz and sovkhoz farms was divided to the members as small lots of 0.5–1.2 ha called cota. The challenge that subsistence farmers face is that this amount of land is too big to work manually and too small to start a farm. To work this amount of land, several people or some machinery such as a tractor is needed. As a result, people either sold this cota or rented it to those who had a tractor and some knowledge of how to work the land. Initially liders were the former kolkhoz/sovkhoz directors or other people who managed to benefit from the Perestroika and privatization of the remaining agricultural infrastructure. Later, new liders appeared that, for example, earned their money by working abroad and today represent a new class of rural entrepreneurs. Those that lease their land to liders are getting paid with a defined percentage of the harvest. This means that the subsistence farmers carry the risk of a bad harvest, no matter the reason. In general, liders aim to buy or rent more and more land while building an infrastructure that increasingly relies on credits. Today, most of the liders are heavily indebted and strongly dependent on banks. Due to the composition and the history of the liders, their understanding and implementation of agricultural production is harmful toward ecology and the soil. I now invite you to take the time to learn more and to listen to multiple narratives.

RODICA

Rodica is a remarkably strong woman in her fifties. She runs a farm close to the capital Chişinău together with her husband, Jevgeni. Their three children work regularly abroad in Poland and Italy in construction and gastronomy. Rodica and her husband not only take care of their farm, but also of her sister Lena two children. Lena left her abusive husband in 2009 and has been working in the agricultural sector in Italy since then. Both children are teenagers and cannot wait to be old enough to also leave for Italy. Rodica has a very heavy workload. She works from 5 am until 10 pm. Everyday. She gets up in the morning, feeds the animals, milks the two cows and then travels 45 min to Chişinău in order to bring a few liters of milk to a woman to sell it on the local market. Returning already by 9 am, she prepares breakfast for the children and Jevgeni, who is just then coming home after his night shift at a carpark in the capital.

He then goes to sleep; she brings the cows to a field close by so they can graze. After that, she works in the garden and prepares lunch. Sometimes she is lazy, she told me, and goes to sleep for a half-hour after lunch. In the afternoon, they work together on whatever needs to be done. They do not rent their land to a lider. The children used to help but they now work abroad and when they come home after a few months working abroad, they are exhausted and require a proper rest. Rodica wants the children to save the money they earn so they can build their own houses. Her way of coping with the immense workload—that is, taking care of the animals and plants and from two to five children at the same time—is to completely overwork herself every day. She does not accept any help from the children, instead encouraging them to save their energy, recover and focus on building their own futures. She hopes this will not be abroad but close to her. Taking care of herself is an everyday struggle and is only sometimes reflected in a half-hour midday nap.

ALESJA

Alesja grew up in a Ukrainian village in Moldova in a kolkhoz family. As a child, she helped her parents harvest tobacco. Both of her parents, as well as many people in the village, died from the effects of tobacco growing. As a single parent, she tried to create a better livelihood for her children than the one she had herself. She decided to plant fruit trees. Her children, who used to support her in her work, currently all live and work abroad. One daughter lives in Ukraine, the other works in Italy, and her son is in Spain. Alesja has been struggling with this situation for years. She now lives half of her time in Chişinău and half of it close to her orchards, which are two hours away from the capital.

Me: How did you come to run the orchard?

Alesja: We have worked with tobacco since we were children. It was strictly forbidden then. But the parents didn't always manage to cope with the work, so we helped. Then when examiners came, the parents hid us. The parents were threatened with punishment if they saw even one child working with tobacco. I started to understand early on why this work was so unhealthy. I then asked myself how I could work with the earth and earn enough to eat and live without having to plant tobacco. I sat down and thought and counted and counted. Trees can give more harvest than tobacco. That also means more income. Working with trees is also much more interesting and beautiful.

Me: Did your parents work on a kolkhoz farm?

Alesja: Yes, that was on the kolkhoz farm. It was a catastrophe. It was such unpleasant work. Until now I have memories of it. It was not free will to do this work. We were taken out of bed early in the morning with great effort, at 4 already, because the tobacco had to be collected before sunrise, so that it wouldn't stick together, so that there wouldn't be any dew on it. By 7 the tobacco had to be harvested. Then the car was loaded and the tobacco was driven away. Then it came into a shelter and we put every single leaf on a string with a needle. I can't remember much

joy as I have now with the fruits. This work was hard and unpleasant. The hands were black and dirty from this tobacco. Getting the hands clean was a real problem. It took a lot of effort to clean them. You had to use a piece of paper to take a piece of bread and a tomato and eat them. That's how we ate lunch. There were no gloves then. Nobody thought to protect themselves at that time. And the next morning you had to get up and harvest tobacco again. It was hard.

Alesja later moved to Chişinău, had two children and became a single mother after a divorce. When Perestroika began, life was very hard. As the child of a kolkhoz farm family, she did not count as a worker. Still, she fought for her right to receive land and was able to plant trees on it. Until the harvest came, she had to find a way to survive. She went around villages and asked people if she could take fruit from their trees. She gathered jars from everywhere in the city, with the help of the children. Others would have been embarrassed, but she did this always with her head held high. "In those days of Perestroika you just had to see how to get through," she said. As many others, she sold her preserves at the market. She could not survive in the city because of the high cost of rent and gas, so she moved to the countryside, and was glad to be near her infirm parents. There she grew vegetables between the planted trees in order to feed herself and her children. Her subsistence began to flourish in the place where the tobacco had been. The children helped a lot, especially her daughter, and she was able to start to love agriculture again.

Alesja: It's the children which taught me to love the earth. What love for the earth should I have developed by working with tobacco? But the children were always happy to see such a small seed now become a big plant.

Me : How is it to work in the orchard since the children went abroad?

Alesja: The difference is incredibly big. When I knew that my children were in the city, I got up in the morning with such enthusiasm. Early in the morning at 5 I went weeding, collecting wood for the next season. I had so much energy, so much strength, so much will. But now that the children are gone—the worst thing is that they don't have the right documents to come and visit me. When they leave, they can't come back. It's boring without them. I miss them. I no longer have that strength, I no longer have that will. On top of that there are other problems I have now (. . .) Last year they offered that I sell our orchard. The younger daughter told me to do it. I was in a terrible state. I was alone, the children were gone. No one can help. Alone I'm overwhelmed (. . .) It wasn't all that easy. And I felt the need to sell. The son also told me to sell, they won't let you work there in peace anyway, he told. They want the land, you have to understand that. They will harm you, they will do mischief there. You can't fight them, they have power, money and who are you next to them. So there was a moment when I wanted to sell, but my daughter Anastasia, who raised the orchard with me, said: The garden is not for sale. I might come back, who knows, maybe I will spend my old days there. The garden means more to her than to me.

Me: She also has worked a lot in the orchards!

Alesja: Yes. Every single tree she has grown and with her 24 years she knows that she has her own orchard. After all there are 200 trees there. That is her property (. . .)

Me: And your son?

Alesja: He is in Italy. They have thought and decided that it is best for them at this time. I would like to live with the children, but they are there now. That would be better, they say. But in the conversations with my son I hear that nothing is better there. He's drawn home. Everything is strange there. There is only work, house, work, house and no friends (. . .)

Me: Many tell me that it is difficult to sell the harvest. How about you?

Alesja: I have been thinking for a long time about how to do it and I have come to the conclusion that it is important to process the products before selling them. Here lies the profit (. . .) If it is of high quality, people will always buy from you. Many have understood what kind of work it is. I put the glasses in the garden, on the fire with the branches of the same fruit trees. I am lucky to meet people who appreciate that (. . .) These liders who also had peaches did not have as good peaches as I did. They chemically processed their trees. I had to sell it within a week. The transport costs were very high. As soon as the harvest was ripe I only had to call and people came because they knew I had a good product. They paid three or four times more. Everyone said sell it. Export, export. But why sell to people far away when I don't even know who is going to eat them? I'd rather sell to the people around me. You know, the garden has changed me a lot. Every flaw in my life I have jetted with the weeds. A sin here, that doesn't want to come out but it will soon or later (. . .)

Pressure from the outside to sell the orchard continues to increase over time. The regular harassment and the unclear future prospects of her children contributed to a fundamental lack of motivation. But Alesja keeps trying to maintain the garden on her own while her three children are abroad. She seeks to create a place for them, a space that opens the possibility to imagine a future where they come back and live with her again. She saved money for decades and finally bought her own first car. This new resource gave her the opportunity to bring her fruits by herself to the market and home to consumers without having to pay expensive transportation costs. It also allowed her to visit the elderly home more often and regularly bring Oxana, one of its inhabitants, to the orchards. Oxana is 45 years old but was brought to the elderly home because she is blind and her family was unable to cope. During the harvest time, Oxana helps Alesja in the garden, pitting cherries and peaches. Alesja also tries to involve the village children in picking fruits, giving them a few buckets of the picked fruits in return. She thinks it is also important to teach them how to cultivate and can fruit on the fire with branches from the fruit trees; this enables an ecologically closed circuit and a favorable processing method. She developed this process of reciprocity and circular out of necessity over her lifetime, as she was poor and without infrastructure; it gives her motivation to see nowadays other people reflecting on ecological farming, as she has been doing this for decades already but without this concept in mind. However, after a while the parents did not let the children help anymore. And, her car was burned while she was inside the house. Alesja knows the men

who did this and that it happened because she is not willing to sell her orchards, the orchards that mean everything to her, to her daughter and to Oxana.

Alesja has developed many ways of dealing with (seemingly hopeless) personal and political crises over her life course. After working with tobacco plants as a child, she had to develop a new relationship with plants to care for and harvest them. This renewed relationship allowed her to survive but also brought joy and beauty. Her children helped her by sharing their enthusiasm and her relationship with agriculture grew to be reciprocal—the plants helped to solve her problems. If, as she says, she made mistakes, they were put into perspective in her communication with the weeds. However, since the children left, she finds it difficult to maintain a relationship with the work with the trees; now, her motivation fades. She has tried many things to avoid losing herself in loneliness. The mutual relation between Oxana and Alesja was enriching. Sometimes she would also pay people from the village in the intensive harvest weeks, as her children could not help. But paying others turned out to be difficult socially—there can be a lot of envy involved, even anger, she explained. While many years of intensive care and maintenance of the trees finally allow for good harvest, it is unclear whether she will sell her land as she now faces threats and attacks. Of course she doesn't want to sell the orchards as they are not only a space to escape the city and the elderly home. Still, this place of self-care that nurtures Aljesa's and Oxana's spirits, that gives motivation and hope, is in danger recently.

INA AND SERGEJ

Ina and Sergej are both in their 70s and live in north Transnistria, close to the Ukrainian border and far away from the capital. This area is especially facing depopulated villages. They have taken care of their farm as well as their two grandchildren for the past six years while their children work abroad. While they were working undocumented for a few years, the children were not able to come back to Transnistria/Moldova. They legalized their status, but the working conditions are so time and energy shaping that they do not allow for childcare and the employer does not allow children on the farm. It was always unclear if they would be able to stabilize their living conditions, so they would plead their parents not to sell the land; although they hoped they wouldn't be forced to return, it was a possibility. Since the children left, Ina and Sergej have reduced their subsistence to the minimum. They take care of their garden and their two cows, but they cannot work their land anymore and therefore rent it to a lider. They had to do this as they do not trust those around them to organize such an action as buying a tractor together and using it all together. Often when Ina and I meet we reflected on how trustful relations are missing but would be so important. And we reflected upon the lack of a younger generation, that is urgently needed to work on this. Some years later they were not even able to care for both cows anymore: the neighbor who used to bring all the cows in the village to graze in exchange for food is not doing so anymore. In her 70s, Ina earns some extra money by taking care of empty houses, as the owners live in the capital or abroad. Ina is happy to have this opportunity as she sees how the other elderly in their

village that do not receive any additional money barely live off their small subsistence. They cannot even afford to become sick, as getting ill could be a death sentence under these living conditions–a topic we also often discussed.

I saw Ina and Sergej in 2013 and 2017. They always hoped that their children would come back home or take the kids and maybe also themselves abroad. Only in 2019 were they able to get the kids. Shortly after, Ina had a stroke. They are not able to immigrate and live together with their children and grandchildren, as so-called family unification is not meant for parents. Now Sergej is taking care of Ina alone. And while the children are not able to support them financially, they still did not sell their land, because who knows, they might still want to come back one day.

EMILIAN AND VALA

Emilian and Vala both come from families that have been farming for generations in the kolkhoz. They are in their 70s and live in a village close to Hîncești, around one and a half hours away from the capital. Their village is less depopulated than others. The closer you are to Chișinău, the more populated villages are. Still, all three of their children have been working and commuting between different jobs and countries for many years, and for now they spend most of their time abroad. Because of the lack of physical help, they are only growing grapes; they stopped having animals and reduced vegetable cultivation to a few tomato plants. Their farm became a monoculture farm.

Me: So because you worked for the kolkhoz you received land when they closed down?

Emilian: Yes, they divided the land and I got something. But the tractors and the storehouses were not divided. So I had to buy a storehouse. Down there in the village, where the shop is now. That was when people started working for themselves. Not for the farm. But where to sell, I don't know. Some were cheated. They didn't get paid for their products. People got tired of working for nothing. They stopped working the land and that was it. And that's it. But I bought another four acres and planted vines on it. There were still some old vines here. There is still a piece there that I have to make new but for that I need money that I don't have.

Me: And since when do you have this farm?

Emilian: Since 1997.

Me: The kids were small, right?

Emilian: Yes, one of them was already in school and the daughter too and the other son was still small. Back then we still had cows and sheep. We also had vegetables for our own household. The grapes were for sale.

Me: And the children helped?

Emilian: Of course they helped.

Me: And how do they help now?

Emilian: A little with money. When they come home they help out too. And the daughter, I show you pictures of her. This is my little granddaughter (showing photos). She's in Italy. And this is my daughter. Here we are at the wine exhibition in Hîncești. There we got an award. The daughter lives in Italy for many years.

Me: And the elder son?

Emilian: He is in France.

Me: And the other son.

Emilian: The other son is preparing his wedding. He is now in Switzerland.

Me: And they work in agriculture there too?

Emilian: Yes, the son also works there in vineyards. And the other one in France in construction. And the daughter is taking care of an elderly woman in Italy. As usual, Moldovan women do that.

Me: Has the way you work changed since the children left?

Emilian: The expenses have become much higher. Now I have to pay for every step. Before the children helped, now they help with money, if they can. They already have their own family. I want them to come back. I want them back very much. We even built a house with the children. They helped too. My daughter and wife cooked for the workers. The sons drove their cars to bring the sand and whatever else was needed.

Me: And if you need help, not with the farm but because you are sick or something, who helps?

Emilian: Friends or neighbors.

Me: Friends or neighbors. So people look for each other here?

Emilian: Yes, of course. There are 500 houses in the village. 90 of them are empty. There used to be about 1,500 people living here. Now there are about 1,300.

Me: I see that there are still many children here.

Emilian: Yes, yes, yes. We still have many people here. Not like in other villages. But not everyone knows how to start their own business. After all, we no longer work for kolkhoz but for ourselves. You just have to have a project and take out a loan. But the loans are high. It's 21% for us now. I have just taken out a loan to pay the workers. To buy chemicals and stuff.

Me: In the kolkhoz they worked with chemicals, too?

Emilian: Of course! And how! Hmmm… In Europe they don't like our wine.

Me: Why?

Emilian: Because (pause)… I can't think of the word. It is not in their assortment. Well, because I have no money, I have to do some weeding every few weeks. That is an incredible amount of work and a lot of money (…) If I had herbicides, I could put these on it. But I don't have any biological herbicides.

Me: You work the land with herbicides?

Emilian: No, no, no. They are way too expensive. And where am I supposed to sell the crop?

Me: So you do organic farming?

Emilian: That's the future.

Me: Why?

Emilian: How can you not understand. It's better for your health. For those who will live in this world after us.

Me: So you will do part organic and part non-organic farming?

Emilian: No, look. As soon as I have 100 lei together [around five Euro], I will invest them into the land. If I had more money. I would sit on the tractor and spray everything.

Me: And are there no organic herbicides or are they expensive?

Emilian: There is no such thing. They'd have to be imported. Here is this cap, I was at a seminar there (shows a cap with the inscription Syngenta). There they gave us this cap. This company, Syngenta, did a seminar and gave us a cap, pencil and a pad.

Me: And what did they say?

Emilian: That we should buy their products.

Me: Organic or not?

Emilian: No, no, no, no, no. For preserving agriculture I have to work with others that work ecologically (...)

Emilian and Vala are confronted with big challenges in growing and selling their grapes. Finding a feasible strategy is not easy in these changing times where farmers have to adapt over and over again to new circumstances. During the time as kolkhoz workers they were used to chemical viticulture. When they started to cultivate their fields on their own, the money for chemicals simply was not there. So they started to cultivate organic, which is very labor-intensive, with the help of their three children. Now that the children are gone, manual labor is missing. But as long as their children support them and the village is well populated, they still find workers to help care for their vines, even if it sometimes means having to borrow money to pay people. But the money is not enough for herbicides and even if they would grow more, they would not know who to sell it to, as the local market is run by the liders. So Emilian and Vala are trying to focus on buying more land so that in the future the children might be able to live on it. Because both are older and physically not able to work so much, they do not keep animals or grow enough for their own needs anymore. As long as they are financially supported by the children, they can get food from outside their farm. So they keep to their vision of building a subsistence farm that will eventually be big enough for the children to return and make a livelihood.

INSIGHTS INTO RURAL TOPOGRAPHIES OF CARE IN MOLDOVA

This section attempts to look at crucial challenges and consequences that people cope with in rural Moldova where they find themselves at the end of agricultural care chains, while most relatives, friends and neighbors labor abroad. These chains accompany rural to rural labor mobility and migration and are structurally embedded in the agricultural sector and the care economy that has been reorganized through the international division of (re)productive labor. I aim to provide a sense of rural topographies, that is to describe the material effects of globalization on the production and reproduction of spaces and social relations and how they influence each other in rural Moldova. These topographies—that are as unique, specific and situated as they are indicative of patterns of global power relations—represent the so-called invisible economy within the Iceberg Model of Capitalist Patriarchal Economics (Mies and Bennhold-Thomsen, 1999). I will briefly focus on five interrelated patterns. This enumeration is by no means complete but rather based on the 22 testimonies such as those of Rodica, Alesja, Ina, Sergej, Emilian and Vala and on further insights from the last nine years, including studies on the Roma communities in Moldova.

Gender Roles, Multiple Burdens and Limited Care Capacities

The interviews show that multiple burdens are put on the rural population in Moldova. Gainfully employed subsistence farmers have many spheres of responsibilities: agricultural care (considered as farm work), their additional wage job (often abroad), care activities for children or grandchildren, and further care tasks such as looking after further relatives, friends or neighbors. When people go abroad to perform wage labor, those who stay have to fill in the gap, further enhancing their burdens. Help with care work can be organized in paid or unpaid forms, but the situation is somewhat different with regard to agricultural care: When people labor abroad, it is often the next of kin that take over care responsibilities toward relatives. Women, and grandmothers in particular, are often asked to take over care for children. Sometimes people also turn to distant relatives, acquaintances or neighbors in search of support, most often following traditional gender roles. However, the rising amount of fathers and grandfathers that are taking over care responsibilities toward relatives is visible. They are increasingly taking over caring activities ascribed to women as a result of a feminization of migration patterns. Consequently, there is some movement in the gendered division of labor that is characterized by a contemporaneity of traditional gender roles along with inconsistencies as women are taking over the role of 'breadwinners' abroad. This is also reflected in intergenerational levels, when, for example, a daughter cannot take care of her sick mother because she works abroad and so the father takes over this role. The care of animals, plants and the soil takes place either as gainful employment or within the scope of one's own subsistence. While larger farms employ people, help in subsistence farming is hardly possible to organize. On the one hand, people cannot often afford the additional cost of paying others to help them. On the other hand, finding help in the form of mutual assistance is almost impossible in the countryside. The elderly are already subject to multiple burdens due to the absence of the middle generation, so helping others physically is hardly conceivable. This directly impacts subsistence production, as will be discussed later.

Ethnicized and Gendered Agricultural Care Chains and Labor Relations

Subsistence farmers seldom employ workers on their farms. If they do so for specific tasks, it is often neighbors or people from neighboring villages. On the other hand, bigger farms employ day laborers. According to statistics and surveys conducted in Moldova, these day laborers often belong to the marginalized Romani people. While most former kolkhoz workers received a plot of land after the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the context of the land reform, Romani people did not. This injustice has still not been reflected upon, as Anti-Romanism remains very present in Moldova (Mihalache and Rusanovschi, 2014, 19ff) as in the rest of Europe. Compared to the rest of the population, most Romani people remain excluded from access to land due to this type of discrimination (ibid. 39). Many, predominantly women, toil as agricultural day laborers as a result of their exclusion from the labor market (ibid. 36). According to a survey with 60 Romani women, they report that their

discrimination is also reflected in salaries, as has been stated in an interview: "They pay Roma 100 Lei but they pay Moldovans 120–150. But we need work, so we take the 100." (ibid. 39). Not only do they only receive five euros per day, but their income is always uncertain. Rural Romani women often struggle to survive, performing only day labor in agriculture a few months per year (ibid. 37). Besides working on farms in Moldova, Romani women increasingly travel abroad to places like Ukraine and Russia. Agricultural labor in Ukraine or Russia takes place without a contract and under precarious conditions (Lawton et al., 2018, 11). Lack of land and an extremely precarious day labor income leads to high levels of food insecurity (ibid.). Also, it is to be expected that the agricultural (re)productive division of labor is highly gendered, as Romani women report being mainly involved in tasks such as "harvesting apples, home-based businesses" or preparing and selling food (ibid. 21). The cycles of poverty are desperate, also due to the tragic health conditions many Romani people are facing (ibid. 38) and their exclusion from education (ibid. 26). While many people in Moldova have access to the European labor market by claiming co-ethnicity and receiving Romanian or Bulgarian citizenship, this is rarely possible for Romani people. While certain agricultural care chains end in Moldova, those at the very end are the Romani people living in Moldova—those who are marginalized from access to land, wage labor, health and education. These people, and especially those who are women, toil informally not only in Moldova but also in Ukraine.

Rural Precarity: Reduction of Subsistence, Earth Fertility and Reciprocity

Most of the time the elderly find themselves to be alone in coping with the subsistence. This is especially difficult if they additionally have to take care of small grandchildren or other community members. Usually these burdens are accompanied by a reduction in subsistence, which often includes reducing or phasing out livestock farming. Animals need unconditional and daily care that is especially challenging for older people. Villagers also, as a result, lease their fields to liders—the rural upper class. This leads to the reduction of the agricultural subsistence to a minimum. Agreements with the liders include a fixed harvest share of the leased fields. This includes the fact that in the event of a crop failure, no compensation for the lease is paid. These contractual relationships are accompanied by power relations that in no way imply that those who own land have more power. Landowners are often the ones who have to beg and fight for their harvest share from the liders. As people are facing serious limits on their ability to live off of subsistence, they additionally rely on financial support such as remittances or debts, leading to a cycle of precarity as buying food is also quite expensive. This condition also leads to an agriculture that trends toward monoculture. Rural spaces had already suffered greatly under the kolkhoz cultivation–above all, due to the introduction of tobacco cultivation, intensive livestock farming and the use of huge amounts of pesticide during soviet times. This dynamic was interrupted at some places and many fields rested for decades due to the collapse of the kolkhoz system, and the

soil partly and slowly started to regenerate. However, this new development further limited reciprocity and circularity as such relations are based upon and allow for different plants to grow together at the same places that are able to create caring relations. As an overall dynamic the lider system is accompanied by further soil erosion, a reduction and destruction of Earth fertility and will lead to a decline of humus in the soil and further demise of self-regulative irritation systems.

Vulnerable Rural Social Security Systems

Rural communities build places so that workers who are abroad can return and recover, hence allowing for a regeneration period. Also, people can find caring spaces where they are looked after if needed because they became sick or find themselves unable to continue performing wage labor abroad as a result of injury. As seasonal labor for foreign workers is not only badly paid but also without compensation for the rest of the year, people can only save some money for their future plans by coming home; there they find places where expenses are minimal because of agricultural subsistence and not having to pay rent. Rural communities hence build social security systems that people lack as wage laborers and foreign workers abroad and with limited or even no access to rights. These are not only places where the labor force for the agricultural sector and beyond is being (re)produced through childbirth and care; they also form a central back-up for the people working abroad who can return and resettle and have a place to live or to plan further steps. Those who remain therefore also carry a certain burden to obtain the agricultural subsistence and hold together the land they own by protecting it from land grabbing and expropriation.

On Resiliency, Self-Care and Self-Defense

Owning land is by no means a guarantee of livelihood security, as lack of care capacities and challenges in maintaining the subsistence can result in quasi-possessionlessness. A further challenge is selling the food produced. However, agricultural property gives a better chance at livelihood as the most precarious, including some Romani communities, do not even have this 'privilege'. Those who achieve a good yield by intensive care at times find themselves under pressure by local businesspeople to sell their land. Older people in particular are coming under great pressure. As the agricultural care chains end here, the physical absence of people in the countryside represents a problem due to the lack of physical, social and emotional support to cope with or to organize against the expropriation of their land. People find themselves on their own to develop self-defense strategies. Those who do not want to sell their land may also face perilous attacks. To be in the last place in the series of agricultural care chains and to maintain or even defend one's own subsistence while being thrown back on oneself and the lack of a supportive community is a quasi-impossible challenge. The tendency to sell or rent small plots leads toward a commodification of farmland and a mechanization of agricultural care that again is the basis for enterprises to come in and sell their products. Agricultural and social resiliency is hence also weakened by land grabbing of local upper classes and enterprises such as Syngenta that, in search of new investment

regions, force farmers into dependencies while destroying their soil. These processes are characterized by selling hybrid seeds and poisoning the slowly recovering soil with fertilizers. Self-care and self-defense capacities are therefore generally put into question as rural spaces are put under social and agrarian existential pressure. But small-scale subsistence farming is important as a source of food security for care providing communities, most of whom have no further income. Caring for soil, animals and plants is not only a burden but comes with inter-species healing relations and circular caring practices. When these relationships fall apart, a space of self-care is also destroyed. For this reason it is important to note that when agricultural subsistence is in danger, so is self-care.

New Dependencies: The Leader System and Remittances

Those coming from rural areas in Moldova often perform wage labor in Europe in the most precarious sectors such as in the care economy and in the agricultural and agrifood sector. If their labor relations are characterized by hypermobility, they perform wage labor only for several months a year. This situation does not allow for someone to sustain themselves, invest in the future or support whole families. Others that migrate more permanently, if not illegalized, still face the challenge that they also often labor in precarious sectors abroad that hardly allow for sustaining one's life abroad and financially helping one's relatives at home. While remittances are indeed helpful in particular moments, they do not and cannot compensate for the overall physical absence in rural Moldova and in subsistence production. So while remittances and the hypermobilization of workers are interwoven, both lead to a reduction of subsistence production and farmers that therefore buy more and more (increasingly imported) foodstuffs. Hence rural communities face the very difficult dynamic that they depend even more on money, transnational wage labor, remittances and credits. Whereas in the past the rural population faced inescapable dependencies within the kolkhoz/sovkhoz system, today the rural population heavily depends on the exploitative lider system and on remittances. The lider system is not meant to establish an exchange system that would allow for food sovereignty of subsistence farmers; instead, it puts people into new dependencies, as relying on remittances represents a transnational and neocolonial dependency infrastructure. Both liders and remittances cannot and do not aim for a sustainable solving of the fundamental, local problems. In fact, discourses around remittances and triple-win solutions within the rising remittance infrastructure represent colonizing discourses with the hegemonic effect of linking the understanding of wealth and well-being to money flows and GDP.

FRAGMENTS OF THE PERMANENT SUBSISTENCE CRISIS AND LANDSCAPES OF WOUNDS

Studies on the global care economy, care chains and transnational caring relations have highlighted new possibilities of care from a distance through virtual communication. The testimonies above

(see Rodica, Alesja, Ina, Sergej, Emilian and Vala) show how agricultural care chains cannot be compensated for at the end of these chains. Caring from a distance is not an option here. Rather, caring within subsistence production relies on continuous physical presence and encompasses caring for, about, with and through the surrounding landscapes. I argue that agricultural care chains within rural to rural migration and labor mobility regimes, among other factors, negatively impact well-being in rural Moldova. I further argue that it even hinders an exodus out of rural precarity, as it is a precarity deeply inscribed into landscapes and social relations for many generations and that is therefore especially hard to cope with.

In order to understand this rural precarity as a whole—and as a basis to look at well-being in rural Moldova—it is necessary to contextualize the everyday struggles we have seen above, linking them to the experiences of their communities and to the past by tracing back deeply rooted and omnipresent wounds in the villages. When talking about present challenges, people still refer to the aftermath of forced top-down collectivization during Soviet times and explicitly contextualize their life course within the later post-Soviet processes of decollectivization (see Emilian and Alesja). Those who have lived in rural Moldova for generations often remember and talk about how their relatives experienced land expropriation or how they fought to receive land in the decollectivization period, while confronting a variety of struggles that accompanied these big changes in their communities. The complexity of this time, including experiences of violence and peasant resistance cannot be even rudimentarily done justice here. I argue that the wounds of these experiences are represented today in rural Moldova through transgenerational and environmental trauma that has not been worked through or even recognized. What trauma am I referring to and what do I mean by this? Following the reflections on decolonizing trauma studies (Linklater, 2011; Andermahr, 2016), I understand trauma in this context as shared experiences of danger to life and of subordination as well as experiences of forced expropriation of land that continuously harmed and shaped whole communities over generations. These experiences are inscribed in the individuals just as they are inscribed in the relations between them and others and into the landscapes. What does this mean in the case of rural Moldova?

In order to understand and reflect on recent wounds we have to look into the historical traumas (Brave Heart-Jordan, 1995) of this region: Under the leadership of Stalin, beginning in 1929, private farms were merged into so-called collective farms. With this forced collectivization in the period of the first five-year plan, Stalin ushered in the strongly centralized planned economy era. This violent collectivization aimed for the "liquidation of the kulak class" (Stalin). The so-called kulaks[5] (wealthy farmers) were expropriated without replacement and deported to 'uninhabited' areas or killed (Altrichter and Haumann, 1987; Baberowski, 1998). Poor peasants, on the other hand, became workers on

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[5]Kulak means fist in Russian. The term was used to describe wealthy farmers. Also see dekulakization (Russian: раскулачивание).

the kolkhoz/sovkhoz farms. Consequently, every family shares memories and painful experiences of these times. These processes were accompanied by rural exodus in Moldova such as in other regions of the Soviet Union, as the rural population faced mass famine. In order to control the urban and the rural population in the 1930s and to feed growing cities and industrialization in the name of productivity growth, soviet citizens were given passports. Peasants were excluded from this practice, however, and tied to the land by being forced into food production (Данилов et al., 2001). In the name of 'liberation', the poor rural population again faced living conditions that were similar to serfdom experiences of previous centuries. As the kolkhoz/sovkhoz system was one of exploitation and subordination, workers had almost no say in the means of production or free choice on labor relations and were bound to live as poor, rural workers. Only in the 60s were peasants granted passports (Engebretson, 2007, 13). Today, people that identify themselves and their families as Moldavians describe how they were suddenly faced with 'people from Moscow' sent to tell them what to do. Others remember how they were expected to learn and to speak Russian and how their families experienced a devaluation of their communities (life stories from further interviews that are not included here). I argue that ethnicized conflicts in Moldova were and remain experiences that are to be analyzed within the decolonial trauma studies framework of ethnostress (Antone and Hill, 1992). Soviet policies of indigenization (see коренизация/korenizatsiya) had complex and occasionally contradictory effects on 'ethnic' inclusion and exclusion (King, 1998). All of the rural population in fact suffered, but the forced collectivization and implementation of the kolkhoz/sovkhoz system affected people differently. This is visible when listening to their stories and is a viewpoint also shared by Igor Cașu who analyzed the social and ethnic composition of victims from that time. He therefore suggests that "Stalinist terror in Soviet Moldavia should not be categorized as ethnocide, but rather as genocide or a crime against humanity" (Cașu, 2010, 53). While it has been recognized in settler societies, postcolonial regions and in regard to religious or ethnicized/racialized minorities—to a certain degree at least—that such experiences have long standing effects on communities, this has not been reflected on in relation to Moldova.

Not only did the forced collectivization during Soviet rule establish long standing toxic labor relations and living conditions regarding social and health aspects for the rural workers, it also accelerated environmental destruction and inscribed itself into the landscapes as wounds. Atomic gardening was introduced (Turea, 2019) and Khrushchev together with the Communist Party decided that Moldova should become the "orchard of the Soviet Union" (Low, 1963, 14). Moldova was constructed and remains romanticized as the 'fruit garden' and 'winery' of the Soviet Union. The cultivation of slops and the desiccation of water-sides and swamps led to the acceleration of water and wind erosion for soil on slopes and the salinization of soils in the watersides (Summer and Diernhofer, 2003, 25ff). This—together with the mechanization of agricultural production, the introduction of tobacco plantations (see the experiences of Aljesa), the intensive use of fertilizers and pesticides and an

increase in livestock farming—resulted in adverse conditions for flora and fauna in general and in an agricultural system that over centuries led to the distraction of soil and earth fertility. It is important to mention that such environmental destruction did not begin with Stalin's collectivization, and hence did not occur as an hour-zero-dynamic but was built on the already intensive deforestation in this region beginning in the 14th century as a result of colonization and wars. The exploitation of forests in this region especially accelerated in the 17th to 20th centuries under the rule of the Ottoman and Russian empires (Cocîrță, 2012, 61). "Compared with 1812 forest ecosystems in the Dniester-Prut area decreased from 450,000 to 160,300 ha in 1914: practically been eliminated over two thirds of the forested area." (Cocîrță, 2012, 64). Decades before and during Soviet rule, deforestation was already a recognized problem as it caused soil degradation and soil erosion and led to afforestation programs (Chendev et al., 2015). Though some rise in forestry in Moldova occurred (Cocîrță, 2012, 63), the programs have not been successful on a bigger scale (Brain, 2010). Today, compared to the surrounding countries, Moldova has by far the smallest proportion of forest area (about 12,5%) in relation to the country's surface area (World bank, 2020).

These *ecological wounds* represent themselves on the Earth's surface as landslides and as gullies that have been formed slowly over decades—not at least due to intense deforestation of the previous centuries under colonial rule. Trees are a central component of a functioning ecosystem that allow for reciprocity and circularity between different species, leading to humus formation. Trees also tame the wind, attract water and strengthen the resilience of the soil and its fertility. If trees are missing, then protection and care (of the soil) is missing, too. On top of this, the division of people into rural workers and engineers on farms and the expropriation of land not only harmed people but also accelerated the ongoing destruction of local knowledge of living in and with 'nature'. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and within the context of "ethno-national mobilization" (Crowther, 1991), new traumas emerged (Abbott, 2007). While social wounds were deepened, the very same happened with the already tormented soil. The privatization of the land due to decollectivization namely had further negative impacts on the soil and Moldova risks losing its most valuable resource—the fertility of the chernozem (Summer and Diernhofer, 2003, 26), that is, the black soil that is rated among the most fertile because of its high percentage of humus.

While gullies based on environmental and ecological traumas that need healing are very visible as open wounds in the landscapes in rural Moldova, intergenerational traumas are harder to grasp, hard to name, and yet, I argue, they weigh heavily in social relations. The effects of trauma on communities in Moldova that have over many generations suffered under changing repressive political regimes and environmental extraction need serious engagement. I can only hint at a few aspects that are visible at the edge of the testimonies presented and omnipresent in society: alcoholism and violence against women in intimate relations (see Lena, Rodica's sister), attacks on and threats to the livelihood of poor subsistence farmers (see Aljesa) and underdeveloped solidarity structures in villages along with a lack of collective care practices and trusting communities. Alcoholism and

domestic violence have already widely been recognized as problems. Moldova has the highest alcohol consumption in the world, especially in rural regions and men are especially affected (World Health Organization, 2018). While alcoholism is related to morbidity and mortality, it is furthermore the strongest risk factor associated with domestic violence in Moldova (Ismayilova, 2015). A study shows that seven out of ten women from rural areas of the country (six out of ten in urban areas) have suffered at least once in their lifetime from violence in intimate relations (World Health Organization et al., 2016). Widespread alcoholism, in the same way as violent relations in communities that experienced colonialism and ongoing structural discrimination, has already been recognized as a symptom of historical and transgenerational trauma (Antone and Hill, 1992; Brave Heart-Jordan, 1995). Therefore questions of healing have become an important community-based approach among those that experienced "massive losses of lives, land, and culture from European contact and colonization resulting in a long legacy of chronic trauma and unresolved grief across generations" (Brave Heart and DeBruyn, 1998). Although the trauma of neocolonialism has also been put on the table (Švarc, 2013), neither Moldova's past colonial power relations nor recent neocolonial experiences of subordination, exploitation and discrimination within or outside the country have so far been situated within this context, nor have the ongoing experiences of intergenerational (re)traumatization been analyzed regarding their effect on individuals and communities in order to approach healing perspectives.

Whereas in general community-level effects of trauma are indeed perhaps the most insidious and the least studied and understood (Evans-Campbell, 2008, 327), decolonial trauma approaches are urgently needed in the case of Moldova and represent an important area for further investigation. I want to briefly point to a crucial symptom that I mentioned above. This symptom is represented in all testimonies and is to be considered in the analysis of post-Soviet community trauma in rural Moldova. It also serves as a point of departure for theorizing agricultural care chains: The underdeveloped solidarity structures in villages and lack of collective care practices and trust in communities. We have seen how people are thrown back on themselves in their everyday lives. It is not only Rodica, Alesja, Ina, Sergej, Emilian and Vala who are relatively isolated and alone when dealing with structural challenges and care needs on their farms. Apart from global power relations, subsistence farmers also face local power relations and at times even attacks (see Aljesa) that hardly allow for well-being and living on subsistence production (especially see Ina and Sergej). Furthermore, people do not trust each other in general or in everyday life and do not aim to organize agricultural production together with others but are instead thrown back to the liders (see Ina and Sergej). I argue that when it comes to building alternative agrarian structures that would allow for well-being in rural Moldova, people do not only face power relations they can hardly handle and that hinder such movements and critical endeavors, but they also carry historical traumas that have not been addressed so far. Pinderhughes and colleagues argue that one of the symptoms of community trauma is "a low sense of collective political and social efficacy" along with further symptoms such as intergenerational poverty, limited employment, long-term unemployment and deteriorated environments (Pinderhughes et al.,

2015, 13)—all factors that are represented in (rural) Moldova. The low sense of collective political and social efficacy must be given special consideration against the background of post-Soviet rural experiences of collectivization and the kolkhoz/sovkhoz farms. The farming system that has been declared to be 'collective' (kolkhoz is a shortcut of коллективное хозяйство/kollektivnoye khozaystvo, meaning collective economy), I argue had a major impact on individuals, social relations, communities and the imaginations of people in post-Soviet regions. Beyond creating individual and transgenerational trauma due to the violent experiences of past decades, it affected the everyday life of communities and is inscribed into the structures of villages. The term collective and even more so, collective as a concept is closely tied to the darker side of history (apart from nostalgic people, who also exist), and is hence linked to experiences of subordination, compulsion and a failed system. Collective in the cultural archive (Said, 1993) has been linked to a state-controlled authoritarian organizing principle. It is for this reason that there is barely even a discursive space for addressing alternative collective organizing.

This might be one of the biggest traumas—that the Soviet Union and the politics of forced collectivization and its aftermath have inflicted on people and whole communities: It occupied imaginations of collectivity and collective power. Instead of being a healing process, decollectivization fragmented farms and separated people while capitalist entrepreneurship (see the lider system but also the interview with Emilian) developed as the only post-socialist way of organizing (agriculture). Lone fighters become the dominant mode of existence. Socially, this meant that everyone was fighting for survival according to the strategy that everyone secures what they can for themselves. Luckily, practices and worldviews that contradict these dynamics exist, most visibly in every day caring relations, as we have seen in the testimonies. They represent seeds toward healing practices but also toward decolonizing agricultural care chains. They show how people refuse the integration of their agricultural production into the international food market, develop relations of mutual aid and solidarity and do reciprocal care within relations of living in and with 'nature' (see Aljesa). They furthermore consider further generations and refuse to use toxic fertilizers to poison the soil (see Emilian), do not exploit others for their own reproduction but handle what they can and are capable of (see Rodica) and still believe in the idea of organizing things together (see Ina). Finally, and in the context of a personal endeavor, people work through their Soviet and post-Soviet traumas while developing healing practices and strategies of self-determination (see Aljesa).

I argue that following agricultural care chains to their ends and looking at the effects of these phenomena on subsistence production in Moldova reveals contours of long-standing rural precarity that manifest as a permanent subsistence crisis. Following Mies, I understand subsistence production as "all work that is spent in the production and maintenance of life and also has this purpose" (Mies and Bennhold-Thomsen, 1999), but the understanding of what constitutes a crisis needs to be sharpened. Whereas the global care crisis (Isaksen et al., 2008) has also been referred to as "permanent reproductive crisis" (Federici, 2013), the hegemonic framing of crisis

within the subsistence crisis discourse is rather narrow. Subsistence crisis in the European context has so far been understood as almost tantamount to a famine or hunger crisis, though as a crisis "of lesser intensity" (Bass, 2010, 141). Within this context the so-called European subsistence crisis of 1845–1850 has been referred to as "the last European subsistence crisis" (Gráda et al., 2007). It has been considered a state of emergency for a limited time that is mainly characterized by crop failures, increase in prices of basic foodstuffs, decline in real wages, lack of food and accompanied by a starving population and hunger-induced illness as well as high rates of mortality, mobility and low rates of population fertility, marriage and economic growth.

I propose a different understanding of the subsistence crisis, one that is able to grasp the recent precarity in rural Moldova and other regions. Understanding of this crisis can not depart from a definition as a rather isolated and self-contained problem of the past; rather, the broader conditions of the "Iceberg Model of Capitalist Patriarchal Economics" (Mies and Bennhold-Thomsen, 1999) must be taken into consideration. Following the testimonies above and the idea of current multiple crisis (Vielfachkrise according to Demirović and Maihofer, 2013), I challenge this hegemonic understanding of a subsistence crisis. Demirović and Maihofer propose an understanding of crisis that attempts to take into account the diversity and inherent logic of various crisis processes. They assume that crises are forms of autonomous (protracted or rapidly destructive) processes, each of which has a specific character resulting from social conditions and concrete conflicts (ibid. 32). Which social processes and phenomena are determined to be crises differs for different persons or groups while the central mechanism of domination is to not allow the crisis dynamics to be grasped in their internal context—to isolate or shift them socially, spatially or temporally (ibid. 33). According to Demirović and Maihofer, crises are always crises of concrete contexts of domination and therefore crisis dynamics and crisis phenomena always form an internally interconnected context (ibid. 34).

Following insights into rural Moldova and these elaborations, I redefine the subsistence crisis as a permanent yet contested and changing state of 'rural' precarity and vulnerability (see Butler, 2012, especially 141ff.) that has existed since primitive accumulation and enclosure (expropriation of the commons)—in Europe (see Federici, 2004) and in the colonies as well as in settler societies-that expresses itself differently depending on time and space. Within this crisis, life and subsistence production is put under threat, while contours and possibilities for change are exposed. The subsistence crisis is mainly characterized by the radical devaluation of 'nature' and subsistence production in general and the appropriation of care, care capacities and caring spaces for potential short-term productivity growth and capital accumulation. This crisis has to be understood as a global crisis that tends toward the sustainable destruction (following "sustainable underdevelopment" by Spivak, 2012) of reciprocity, circularity and resilience in rural spaces. Due to the colonial history and contemporary coloniality (Quijano, 2000; Lugones, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Tlostanova, 2012), the permanent subsistence crisis involves the worldwide

destruction of knowledge and ways of living in and with 'nature' such as the gendered racialization/ethnicization of people along with a dehumanization of 'the other' that is seen as being closer to 'nature' and as a 'free resource' to be exploited. Following Cindi Katz, I argue that identifying contour lines and mapping countertopographies enables connecting places beyond Moldova that are differently affected by this subsistence crises.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK–DECOLONIZING WELL-BEING, COLLECTIVITY AND SUBSISTENCE PRODUCTION

By mapping the very concrete conditions of agricultural care chains, rural precarity not only becomes visible but leads me to contextualize this precarity within a broader understanding of a global and permanent subsistence crisis. This crisis–though it can be considered as an autonomous crisis with its own dynamics and specifies–is strongly interconnected to other crizes and therefore manifolds very localized contours of a multiple crisis (Demirović and Maihofer, 2013), further perpetuating exploitation and intersectional marginalization according to age, ethnicity, gender, class and neocolonial experiences. We have seen how in the context of Moldova the subsistence crisis is linked to the recurrent destruction and expropriation of collectivity and collective labor as well as to the environmental crisis, the crisis of masculinity (Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2013) and the gendered health crisis (Field, 1995; Hinote and Webber, 2012).

Diversifying the single story about Moldova as the "country without parents" and reframing it as one of the regions that carries the world on its shoulders could be a decolonizing narrative. This can only be understood by taking into consideration the structural conditions of agricultural care chains. These chains that hinder an exodus out of rural precarity not only make visible how rural Moldova forms a part of the invisible economy (see the Iceberg model) of today's neocolonial food production regimes in Europe, they also show how wealth and poverty are fundamentally interconnected according to the international division of (re) productive labor within the neocolonial agricultural labor regimes in Europe. So while following Mies and Bennhold-Thomsen (2000, 5), I agree that—among other liberating steps—various kinds of local and transnational oppressors need to get off the backs of rural communities in Moldova and additionally that Romani people need access to land. A transnational perspective on the abolition of the international division of (re)productive labor is also inevitable.

In the context of Moldova, this division comes on top of post-Soviet traumas (Wakamiya, 2011) and needs special attention in terms of identifying localized perspectives and challenges to healing. At the same time, following the contour lines of the subsistence crisis and looking into further topographies of formerly colonized regions, it can be seen that countertopographies build the basis of developing common struggles and allow for an exchange of urgently needed

healing practices. Such an endeavor is urgently needed and inevitably linked to further local politics of underdeveloped solidarity structures in villages that find themselves on the other end of agricultural care chains as many European countries withdraw from farming. Villages in wealthier regions in many European countries that have increasingly been converted into bedrooms or holiday resorts for the middle and upper classes also face a lack of collective care practices in organizing agricultural production together. Therefore, partially due to their own financial challenges, farmers periodically recruit workers from peripheral regions and send them back when not needed. Hence, a liberating perspective would include decolonizing collectivity in the context of post-Soviet/postcolonial experiences and decolonizing subsistence production in wealthier regions in the context of "learning to unlearn" (Tlostanova and Mignolo, 2012) what counts as progress and what constitutes well-being. This would include decolonizing our mindsets and social relations (Walia, 2013, 250ff) as well as developing different access to subsistence production and building "caring communities" (see Sorgegemeinschaften, Precarias, 2011, 104ff) in rural spaces such as independent and decentralized bridges toward cities that could on an ethical and material level link the well-being of every village to the well-being of every other village.

The subsistence crisis reveals landscapes of deep wounds in Moldova–wounds that are based on centuries of subordination under different empires and oppressors. It has led to individual and community trauma, the sustainable destruction of circularity, reciprocity, the soil and knowledge transfer about living in and with 'nature'. This article is limited because a deep engagement with traumas in Moldova is not within the scope of my research. Instead, it serves as a first step in opposition to different single stories as well as to empirical, epistemological and disciplinary narrowings; it is a proposition for thinking about the nexus of caring relations and the subsistence crisis that is informed by

trauma studies and that is aiming for research toward healing practices within a decolonial, abolitionist perspective.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The interviews supporting the conclusions of this article are not readily available because they are confidential as agreed upon with the participants. Questions should be directed to Dina Bolokan, bolokan@protonmail.com.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The participants provided their oral consent to participate in this research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Invisible Agents of Rural Development. Russian Immigrant Women in the Finnish Border Region

Maarit Sireni*, Pirjo Pöllänen and Olga Davydova-Minguet

Karelian Institute, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland

The rural region of North Karelia is located close to the Finnish-Russian border, and faces challenges due to population decline and labor shortage. However, it has a unique strength which is its proximity to Russia. This paper analyses the perceived role of immigration in enhancing the vitality of North Karelia. It investigates how the impact of immigration is presented in the regional media, and how Russian-speaking immigrant women's roles as "agents of development" can be interpreted on the basis of their interviews. The analysis is based on text material obtained from the regional newspaper, and ethnographic interviews conducted among Russian-speaking immigrant women. Findings based on the newspaper material indicate that immigrants are valued primarily for their contribution to regional economic development. However, in some of the texts, immigrants are presented as an integral part of the region's population, who diversify the skills of communities and thus create potential for promoting local resilience. The analysis of the interview data indicates that the proximity of the border, transnational connections, and ethno-cultural capital which is based on immigrants' national background are important factors that impact on the attractiveness of North Karelia for Russian immigrant women. Everyday transnational multiculturalism encompasses women's precarious employment which impacts on the well-being of broader communities on both sides of the border. Although Russian immigrant women are a vital part of these communities, they do not themselves participate in the newspaper discussions about the vitality of rural communities. This indicates that Russian women are "invisible" agents of rural development, who are not fully recognized as contributors of resilience in North Karelia.

Keywords: Finnish-Russian border, immigration, women, transnationalism, vitality, resilience

INTRODUCTION

Aims

Recent patterns of migration in Europe indicate that in addition to well-established urban destinations, an increasing number of international migrants are attracted by rural areas (de Lima et al., 2005; McAreavey 2012). This is largely due to a demand for inexpensive and flexible labor in agriculture, food processing, construction, and tourism industries (Rye and Andrzejewska 2010; Dufty-Jones 2014; Bock et al., 2016; Rye and Scott 2018). Other motives of international migrants who end up in rural areas relate to lifestyle reasons of those who seek a rural idyll (Krivokapic-Skoko and Collins 2014) or pursue other personal goals (Carson and Carson 2018). Among the multiple causes of migration, marriage-based migration has been seen to lead to

increased border crossings and a globalization of the countryside (Flemmen and Lotherington 2008; Pöllänen 2013).

Within rural studies, immigration is identified as an asset to rural locations which suffer from labor shortage and population decline (Kasimis et al., 2010). When immigrants are integrated in rural communities, they can also contribute to local resilience–i.e. the capacity of rural communities to cope with, adjust to, and recover from economic and social transformations (McManus et al., 2012; Kotilainen et al., 2015; Søholt et al., 2018). Though it is hoped that immigrants may be a means by which to "rescue" rural regions (Aure et al., 2018), research suggests that foreign arrivals are not always included in rural communities (Søholt et al., 2018). Immigrants in destinations with a limited experience of immigration may face resistance (McConnell and Miraftab 2009) and find themselves trapped in low-paid precarious positions (Rye and Scott 2018), as rural areas often lack the services, networks and competencies to effectively support their integration (McAreavey and Krivokapic-Skoko 2019).

Within migration studies, the concept of integration has been defined and approached from various perspectives (Saukkonen 2020; Martiniello and Rath 2014). Though immigrants would not meet the criteria of integration as defined above (e.g., labor market integration, language skills), their own everyday experiences of integration may be different (Saukkonen, 2020, see also; Könönen, 2015). The concept of transnationalism challenges the traditional integration discussion because of its methodological nationalism. Methodological nationalism has been criticized for the way of seeing a social phenomenon only through the lens of the nation state. The transnational perspective concentrates on the everyday reality of immigrants, which is constructed and bodily lived in more than one location through social, economic, political and cultural ties with their places of origin (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Assmuth et al., 2018). For example, rural border areas provide some individuals, such as women who are responsible for giving care on the other side of the border, with a livable context for their transnational everyday lives (Pöllänen and Davydova-Minguet 2017).

The present article combines the perspectives of rural studies and migration studies, and analyzes the role of immigration in rural development in a new immigration destination in Finland. Firstly, it investigates the interpretations of the role of immigrants in enhancing the vitality of the region North Karelia in the Finnish-Russian border area in eastern Finland by analyzing how the impact of immigration is presented in the regional newspaper. Secondly, the study analyzes how the border region's vitality can be perceived through the interviews of Russian immigrant women who live their transnational everyday lives in the rural border area. The analysis presented in this study is based on two qualitative data sets: text material obtained from the regional newspaper, and ethnographic interviews conducted among Russian-speaking immigrant women. Combining these two approaches, the study explores how the public discussion frames the everyday lives of female immigrants, and how they negotiate and contest the roles that are offered to them in their immigration destination.

In the following section, the region of North Karelia, the Finnish vitality policy and resilience, and the concepts of integration and transnationalism are introduced. Data sets and analysis methods are presented in **Materials and Methods**. Findings are presented in **Results**, starting with the findings of the media discussion, and proceeding to the findings of the ethnographic research. The discussion section concludes the paper.

Context: North Karelia

The region of North Karelia, located in eastern Finland, represents a predominantly rural and remote area within the EU (ESPON 2011, p. 17). Amongst other European NSPA (northern sparsely populated areas) regions, North Karelia has unique geographical characteristics–a sparse, declining, and aging population, a harsh climate, abundant natural resources, a relative lack of agriculture, a strong potential for renewable energy, long distances from markets, and high costs of land transport. According to the (OECD 2017, p. 20), its strengths in the Finnish economy include its forestry resources (wood and minerals exports), environmental assets (wilderness areas), and its proximity to Russia. North Karelia, which features a 304 km long border with Russia, is part of the European gateway to the east of the Russian Federation. It has the relatively prominent checkpoint of Niirala-Värtsilä located in the municipality of Tohmajärvi, with more than 1 million annual border crossings.

The region can, however, be characterized as a typical new immigration destination with relatively little experience of international migrants. Rural communities in the region have historically been ethnically homogeneous, except for a group of Karelian refugees stemming from areas annexed to the Soviet Union after World War II. North Karelia differs from typical European labor migration destinations in the respect that it lacks a labor-intensive "pull-factor" for immigration (Rye and Holm Slettebak 2020). Currently, about half of the immigrants living in North Karelia are of Russian origin, as the fall of the Iron Curtain has enabled cross-border mobilities, including student exchanges and intercultural marriages (Davydova 2009; Pöllänen 2013).

Of the 160,000 inhabitants of North Karelia, 77,000 live in the regional center of Joensuu. The University of Eastern Finland and the North Karelia University of Applied Sciences are both located in Joensuu. In general, North Karelia suffers from a simultaneous relatively high unemployment rate, and a labor shortage in many sectors because the aging population has led to a smaller available work force. Currently, the elderly dependency ratio in North Karelia is as high as 34.89 (OECD 2017, p. 115). According to population projections, rural municipalities in eastern Finland will continue to have the oldest age structures among the Nordic countries (Grunfelder et al., 2018, p. 32), which implies an increasing demand for health care and other services. Maintaining living standards will therefore depend upon increasing migration and productivity.

At 7.3%, Finland has the lowest share of population born in a foreign country amongst the Nordic countries (Statistics Finland 2020). In line with trends in other Nordic countries, the capital region of Helsinki attracts the highest number of foreigners, including Russian-speakers whose share of Helsinki's population is 2.8 percent (Varjonen et al., 2017, p. 12). Russians are the most important group of immigrants in

North Karelia, making up 44% of 3 774 foreign citizens (Joensuun kaupungin selvitys 2020). Additionally, 2 369 North Karelians have dual citizenship, typically Finnish and Russian. Russian-speakers are both present and visible, for example, in everyday-life in the North Karelian municipality of Tohmajärvi where the interviews were conducted. In Tohmajärvi, Russian-speakers comprise no less than 4% of the municipality's population (Varjonen et al., 2017, p. 12). Therefore, it can be argued that in the eastern Finnish countryside, Russian-speakers serve to portray immigrants in general. Russian immigration and immigration in general to the sparsely populated areas of eastern Finland is a gendered phenomenon, as females are over-represented (Karlsdóttir et al., 2018, p. 38). However, immigrants are a more diverse group consisting of labor, family and educational migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from various backgrounds (Karlsdóttir et al., 2018, p. 26).

Conceptual Framework
Resilience and Vitality Policy in the Finnish Border Area

Resilience is a concept which has been adopted from environmental studies to the social sciences, and which has been theorized and utilized in several ways. In rural studies, the interest has been on the capacity of rural communities to cope with economic and social transformations (e.g., shrinking populations and the restructuring of traditional rural industries), and their ability to adapt to these changing circumstances and recover from crisis (McManus et al., 2012; Kotilainen et al., 2015; Søholt et al., 2018). Issues of trust, sense of community, social inclusion, welfare, networks, and participation are all seen as vital factors for building local resilience (Søholt et al., 2018, p. 222). Therefore, in the case of immigrants, the crucial point is whether they are valued primarily for contributing to regional economic development, as a mobile input into the local labor market, or whether they are given roles as equal co-producers of local resilience. In the case of new immigration destinations, local decision-makers and other key actors may accept immigrants only as workers in sectors which are not attractive to the local population, or as entrepreneurs who create local businesses (Søholt et al., 2018). When immigrants are not welcomed as integrated members of communities, their contribution to local resilience may remain low (Søholt et al., 2018). In some cases, however, immigrants themselves do not perceive the local community as the only framework of their social, cultural and economic activities. For example, immigrants living in border areas tend to have transnational connections and responsibilities on both sides of the border.

In Finland, municipalities are responsible for promoting resilience at the local level. The municipalities of North Karelia have adapted a new approach as part of their municipal strategies. This approach emphasizes the importance of public, private and third sector networks in rural development. The new *vitality policy* calls on the municipalities "... to build their strategies based on unique regional resources as well as to holistically involve other local organizations and individual citizens (communality) and to incorporate different policy sectors in their (rural)

development work" (Makkonen and Kahila 2020). In practice, these vitality policies put an emphasis on raising employment rates for initiating a circle of positive development, including increasing municipal tax revenue, improving municipal services and living environments, and attracting new inhabitants to the local community. In the municipality of Tohmajärvi, its border location and an inflow of immigrants have been identified as potential and unique sources of vitality.

Within border research, the resilience of border areas has been explored as an ambivalent combination of geopolitical threads and a resource for regional development. According to Prokkola (2019), an open border "entails proximity to foreign markets and labor, the possibility to take advantage of cost differentials, the diffusion and stimulation of new knowledge and ideas as well as new regional identities and brands (Sohn, 2014). Some cross-border regions are also argued to serve as 'innovative platforms for multidimensional integration processes, which are needed for more sustainable ways of living' (Blatter 2004, p. 402)". After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the enlargement of the EU, border regions which have traditionally been seen as peripheral and less developed, have become recognized as "motors of development" (Blatter 2004; Sohn 2014). This "window of opportunity" has been identified in eastern Finland since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Eskelinen and Zimin 2004; Izotov and Laine 2012). On one hand, migrants are seen as potential workers, especially in sectors which suffer from labor shortages. In eastern Finland, the care sector is a typical example (Jokinen and Jakonen 2011; Könönen 2011). However, in line with findings from other countries (Rye and Holm Slettebak 2020), research indicates that urban regions in Finland have benefited more from immigration than remote rural regions (Saartenoja 2010; Sarvimäki & Hämäläinen 2010; Reini 2012; Poutvaara 2019). On the other hand, migration raises the issue of whether and how newcomers are integrated as active members of the local society and support its overall resilience and vitality, or whether they tend face precarisation as workers in irregular employment combined with periods of unemployment (Precarias a la deriva 2009; Könönen 2015; Pöllänen and Davydova-Minguet 2017). The latter line of development may not be experienced as a problem by the migrants in the short term, but it can undermine the overall development and vitality of local communities in the long run. Seen from the perspective of Russian migrants, the decision to move to the neighboring country does not typically sever connections with their homesteads, and they tend to maintain regular transnational contact with their relatives and other social networks. As a result, they can also contribute to the vitality of their places of origin. In eastern Finland, this aspect of immigration is of special interest since most Russian immigrants come from areas close to the border.

Integration and Transnationalism

The concept of integration has developed in European discussions on governance and the research of migration, in opposition to the concept of assimilation (Saukkonen 2020, p. 17–22). Integration cuts across various aspects of migrants' accommodation in the new society, and the political measures taken in order to enhance it. It concerns migrants' integration

into the economic, social, cultural and political spheres of society, but also today, integration is considered as a process that includes the society as a whole, and therefore the conversations and research concentrate on the discrimination that migrants face, how different policies affect migrants' inclusion, and how the public perceives migrants and immigration (Saukkonen 2020; Sotkasiira 2018a; 2018b).

In Finland, the integration-related discussion, research, legislation and policies are co-developed with the process of the Europeanization of Finland (Puuronen 2004). The current Act on the Promotion of Integration (2010) sees integration as an interactive development between an immigrant and society, which aims at supporting the immigrant in developing skills required in society and working life while supporting the maintenance of his or her own language and culture (Yijälä and Luoma 2018, p. 48). (Hiitola et al. 2018, p. 14) state that in Finland, integration functions primarily as an administrative concept, the purpose of which is to promote equality and positive social interaction. Even though it is a loose administrative concept, in the public discussion it is often narrowed down to linguistic and occupational schooling of immigrants and their integration into the labor market (Hiitola et al., 2018, see also; Saukkonen 2020). In a broad sense, the concept of integration refers to the whole process by which an immigrant finds his or her place in society (Saukkonen 2020; Hiitola et al., 2018, p. 16). However, integration is strongly associated with the idea of guiding and helping the immigrant to adapt and settle (see Sotkasiira 2018a; Sotkasiira, 2018b; Haverinen 2018; Hiitola et al., 2018).

Whereas integration is based on the views of the host societies, and has been criticized for its container-thinking, the concept of transnationalism focuses on migrants' social, political, cultural and economic networks which transcend the borders of nation-states (Martikainen et al., 2006; Huttunen 2002, p. 44; Martikainen and Haikkola 2010, p. 15). From the perspective of the vitality of rural border areas, integrationalist and transnationalist perspectives on migration should inevitably complement each other (see Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Especially, transnational relations do not exclude the desire of immigrants to integrate into their new surroundings and communities, and can be seen as a resource to increase the vitality of the region. On the other hand, local labor market, economies, businesses, legislation and different integrational measures, as well as the attitudes of the majority population frame everyday lives of immigrants, making it livable or not, and affecting their decision to stay or to leave the region. Immigrants' integration into society and their interaction with the surrounding community can be seen, for example, in their participation in NGOs and voluntary activities, decision-making, voting activity, through social relations or owning property, or from their participation in hobbies.

In migration research, immigrants' transnational connections and their impact on their new home societies have been an object of long-term research (e.g., Flemmen and Lotherington 2008; Flynn and Kay 2017). From the point of view of rural vitality, transnational and especially cross-border connections can have

positive consequences. In the Russian-Finnish context, attention has been concentrated on Russian immigrant women's transnational families, care, and their everyday life (Siim 2007; Pöllänen 2013; Pöllänen and Davydova-Minguet 2017; Davydova-Minguet and Pöllänen 2020). In our previous studies, we have revealed that in the context of North Karelian rural areas, precarious employment and the everyday lives of Russian-speaking women differ from that seen in urban areas. When combined with the close proximity of the border, it in fact enables vivid transnational family connections and care (see Pöllänen and Davydova-Minguet 2017; Davydova-Minguet and Pöllänen 2020).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The empirical part of the present article is based on two data sets: text material obtained from the *Karjalainen* regional newspaper, and ethnographic interviews of Russian-speaking immigrant women living in the border region. By using the two data sets, we approach the role of immigration in the vitality of North Karelia from the points of view of the region's Finnish-speaking key actors, and also the immigrants themselves.

Newspaper Material Collection and Analysis
Data Collection
The *Karjalainen* newspaper (The Karelian) has been issued since 1847, and is the leading daily newspaper in North Karelia. Although it contains foreign, domestic, regional and local news, it has the characteristics of a regional newspaper. It represents traditional printed media which competes with free newspapers, internet news, and social media. According to the *Karjalainen*'s webpages, it reaches about 80 percent of the North Karelian population, and is currently available in both printed and digital forms. All issues published between 1847 and 2020 have been digitalized and stored in a digital archive that is available to subscribers.

Articles commenting on the role of immigration in North Karelian vitality were searched for systematically from the digital archive. As the focus of the present study is on current debate, articles published between 2011 and 2019 were selected for scrutiny. On the first round of data gathering, all articles containing the search term maahanm* [Finnish original–immigra*] were collected and stored in digital form. In the second phase, based on their content and author, the items were classified into categories of foreign, domestic, and regional and local news. Generally, the *Karjalainen* publishes more world and domestic news than regional or local news on immigration. The number of foreign and domestic news items was highest in 2015 during the war in Syria, as more than 32,000 asylum seekers arrived in Finland (Karlsdóttir et al., 2018, p. 24). Recently, the focus of domestic articles has been on documenting the rising support for figures of the Finnish anti-immigration populist party Perussuomalaiset *(the Finns Party)*. The peak year of regional and local news about immigration was 2012, when a group of

TABLE 1 | The analysis process of comments concerned with the role of immigration in the vitality of North Karelia.

Code	Category	Theme
Declining population	Demographic factors	"Despite the immigration, the region is shrinking, and the countryside is declining"
Aging and retiring population		
Too few babies being born		
Negative population forecasts		
Slightly positive migration figures		
Labor shortage	Labor market needs	"Targeted, controlled immigration is needed by the regional and rural labor markets"
Shortage of appropriate labor force		
Need for Russian speaking workers		
Shortage of cleaners and nurses		
Need for more entrepreneurship		
Need for educated labor		
Immigrants are/can be educated		
Immigrants are willing to work		
Foreign students are wanted		
Businesses need to become international	Internationalization	"Mobility and multiculturality make the region more attractive for people and businesses"
Capital is mobile and the region must be attractive for domestic and foreign companies		
People are mobile in the mobility era		
Immigrants enrich the region socially and culturally	Multiculturality	
Immigrants are part of the street view		
How to make immigrants and their children stay?	Integration	"Wellbeing and integration of immigrants generates wellbeing for the region"
Wellbeing of immigrants generates wellbeing for the region		

Somalian refugees arriving in North Karelia hit the headlines (Sotkasiira and Haverinen 2016).

Immigration in North Karelia is commented on in 641 items in total. They consist of editorials, columns, interviews, news, reports, and the opinions of readers. The voice of the newspaper is represented in editorials and columns, and in the selection of other types of articles as well. Finding the balance between good journalism and meeting readers' expectations is not a simple task, as the newspaper has competitors which provide news for free. In Finland as well as in many other European countries, the media discussion of migration is both polarized and politicized (Horsti, 2015). In 2015, when the discussion was heated, the Editor of the *Karjalainen* replied to critics who accused the newspaper of being biased because readers' (negative) opinions on immigration had not been published, stating that the freedom of speech does not mean that racist opinions deserve to be printed (*Karjalainen* 2015a, p. 2). For immigrants themselves, news provided by the internet and social media in their own language are more easily available (Sotkasiira 2017). The *Karjalainen* newspaper is targeted implicitly at a Finnish speaking audience, and immigrants are not intended to be amongst its readers.

Analysis Method

Qualitative content analysis using an inductive approach was utilized in the analysis of the newspaper material (Berelson, 1952; Berg, 2001; Neuendorf, 2002; Krippendorff, 2004). The text mass of 641 items was reduced by coding the contents of articles, and identifying those which discussed the role of immigration in the vitality of North Karelia/North Karelian rural localities. Examples of the codes of the category "articles concerned with vitality" in the first stage of coding were "labor shortage", "declining population of the region", "aging and retiring population", "need of enterprises to become international", "immigrants as

rural entrepreneurs", "immigrants working as highly educated experts", etc. After the first round of coding, and re-reading the articles, a total of 105 items discussed the area of "vitality" from some perspective.

The 105 articles were analyzed in the following stages. The first stage utilized the above coding of the contents of the articles (deconstruction) to isolate specific sub-groups. In the second stage, the original articles were re-read, and the coding system was checked and modified (recontextualization). During the re-reading process, the contents of the original texts were re-evaluated and in some cases their categories were changed. To create fewer categories, codes with similar contents were combined. After that, the contents of the news items were classified in further different categories (categorization). The material is presented in four main themes (**Table 1**). The analysis stays close to the text using the words and phrases used in the articles (author's own translations), but aims at understanding the underlying meaning of the text.

The media analysis on the perceived role of immigration in the vitality of North Karelia focuses on the following issues: 1) the participants in regional and local discussions on immigration, and 2) the aspects of vitality that are given emphasis in the public discussion: whether the discussants value immigration primarily as a contribution to regional economic development, or whether immigrants are given broader roles as co-producers of local resilience. In the interpretation of the material (compilation), attention is especially paid to *who* is talking about immigration, *what* is being said, and *how*.

Ethnographic Research

The collection of interview material was embedded in the methodological tradition of the ethnography of everyday life (Vila 2003; Jokinen 2005; Passerini et al., 2007; see also; Flynn

and Kay 2017). In the analysis of the interviews, we were interested in how immigration impacts the vitality of rural areas when examined from the point of view of immigrant women, and how media discussions coincide with the experiences of Russian immigrant women. We paid special attention to women's transnational ties, and their meaning in making border regions attractive and livable.

Everyday ethnography has two dimensions. First, it concerns the object of interest, namely people's everyday life. Secondly, it refers to specific research methods, including data collection, analysis and ethnographic writing. Everyday life can be studied only by participating in it, by being there, and drifting alongside the people (Junnilainen 2019). For the last twenty years, we have studied Russian immigrant women's everyday life, mostly by using the methods of participant observation and ethnographic interviews (see Davydova 2009; Davydova and Pöllänen 2010; Pöllänen 2013; Davydova-Minguet and Pöllänen 2020). We approach our research field holistically, which means that in our analysis we raise such aspects that are felt to be important on a structural level. Our knowledge, approach and analysis of the field is therefore developing cumulatively from both newer and older datasets, as well as drawing from previous research.

The dataset for the current study was produced within our recent research project (2015–2017) on the perceptions of Russia in the border area of Eastern Finland, conducted in the Tohmajärvi region. The data consists of 21 in-depth interviews conducted with Russian-speaking dwellers of the border region in total. Most of the interviewees (16) were women. In this article we analyze the interviews of female participants, while our ethnographic notes, participant observation materials and interviews of male participants frame our understanding of the overall situation. The interviews lasted from 45 min to 3.5 h. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Russian-speaking informants were interviewed in Russian, and material was analyzed in original language and translated into Finnish/English only when used as a citation. The informants were aged between 32 and 63 years old, with different levels of education, many with higher education degrees. Some of them had re-educated themselves for new professions in Finland. All the women had families, and some were married to Finns, some to Russians, some divorced, and some had children. The women had lived in Finland from anywhere between two to more than twenty years. All of them were in a precarious position on the labor market, although most of them spoke good Finnish.

The analysis of our interview data followed the principles of thematic analysis. We progressed by close reading (Pöysä 2010) the interviews from the angle of local resilience and vitality. In connection with the reading, we classified and coded the interview material thematically. The close reading and thematic classification were guided by the questions of how immigrants attach to the area, what do their transnational connections mean for their attachment to the region, and what are the other aspects of their lives that can impact on the resilience and vitality of the studied rural border region.

As researchers we always must take responsibility for our decisions and choices and consider their consequences for the informants. In this study, the common ethical rules of social

sciences have been followed, the most important of which is to avoid causing harm to the informants (Kuula 2011; TENK 2019). The research material has been compiled from a relatively small community in North Karelia, and the informants could therefore become easily recognized. Therefore, we have avoided giving detailed descriptions of our informants in presenting the data and analysis, in order to protect their anonymity.

RESULTS

Newspaper Discussions About the Role of Immigration in the Vitality of North Karelia

The discussion in the regional newspaper on immigration has been vivid and various contributors have participated in it. Several actors representing North Karelia's business life, state authorities, rectors and researchers of the University of Eastern Finland (UEF) and the North Karelia University of Applied Sciences, experts and consultants in regional development, regional and municipal leaders, civic society actors, politicians, and also the newspaper in the form of editorials and columns, participated in discussions about the role of immigration in the vitality of North Karelia. In addition, some immigrant representatives featuring academics and activists of the local Joensuu District Multicultural Association commented on the issue. Overall, the immigrants' voice is missing from the newspaper discussions on immigration, which are dominated by the Finnish-speaking "elite" of the region.

Table 1 shows how the comments were coded and categorized, and the four main themes identified from the discussions. During the period 2011–2019, problems related to the declining and aging population have been present every year. Labor shortage and the need to attract an appropriate foreign labor force is a more recent discussion which currently dominates the discussions in the newspaper. Notably, arguments supporting controlled labor migration started to gain ground after the Syrian war and the humanitarian crisis which increased the amount of asylum seekers seen in North Karelia.

The need for businesses to become more international, and any positive social and cultural effects of multiculturality are less often used arguments than factors related to the declining population and labor shortage. In **Table 1**, the categories of internationalization and multiculturality are merged under the same theme. Comments which argue the need to improve the overall well-being of immigrants, and the need to integrate them into Finnish society have been rare during the time under investigation. Four main themes emerged from the media texts, and are now discussed in more detail.

Despite the Immigration, the Region is Shrinking, and the Countryside is Declining

The first theme consists of remarks on negative population forecasts and slightly positive levels of migration in North Karelia. Every year, after the official population statistics are published, discouraging demographic facts such as an aging population and low fertility rates are pointed out. Typically, the head of the Regional Council of North Karelia and the

town manager of Joensuu, "celebrate" the slightly positive migration figures (e.g., *Karjalainen* 2011a, p. 4; *Karjalainen, 2012a*, p. 8). However, other commentators including the Editor of the *Karjalainen*, argue that "*immigration will have no factual effect on population figures in rural locations*" (*Karjalainen* 2011b, p. 2), "*immigration does not solve the problem of population decline in North Karelia*" (*Karjalainen* 2015b, p. 2) and "*in spite of the immigration, the future population development will be negative*" (*Karjalainen* 2019a, p. 4). A professor of Human Geography predicts that in a pessimistic tone that despite immigration, North Karelian "*rural areas will be uninhabited in the future*" (*Karjalainen* 2014, p. 19). Therefore, it is seen that although migration figures are positive and immigration is argued to be crucial, the key actors of the region do not expect that immigration will positively influence the population figures of the region.

Targeted Immigration is needed by the Regional and Rural Labor Markets

Labor shortage is a source of worry for private and public sector employees, politicians, researchers, university representatives, municipal leaders, employment authorities, and the newspaper itself. Typically, the commentators on this topic support "targeted, controlled labor immigration" which meets the labor market needs. For example, the rector of the University of Eastern Finland supports targeted immigration to increase the number of students and workers in certain branches of education and businesses (*Karjalainen* 2019b, p. 8). From the texts, it can be seen that more workers are required in the primary sector, low paid service and industrial jobs, tourism, and health care. As the Manager of the North Karelian Chamber of Commerce argues, "*the labor shortage is unbearable without immigrants who would be willing to work*" (*Karjalainen* 2017, p. 28; Karjalainen, 2018, p. 31). The need for Russian speaking staff is frequently mentioned (*Karjalainen* 2011c, p. 2; *Karjalainen, 2012c*, p. 4), and rural municipalities including Tohmajärvi encourage immigrants to set up new enterprises which would bring new livelihoods to rural places (*Karjalainen* 2012b, p. 4; Karjalainen, 2013a, p. 3). In the region where the unemployment rate is rather high, around 15% of the workforce, the discussion in the newspaper about the targeted immigration of the workforce tends to be over-simplifying, somehow concealing the lived experiences of immigrants who have to find jobs in this area. The latest research on the labor market demands in rural areas in North Karelia shows that there are shortages in highly educated work force in health and social sectors (Jolkkonen and Lemponen 2016).

Mobility and Multiculturality Make the Region More Attractive for People and Businesses

Discussions about internationalization in the *Karjalainen* newspaper point out that we live in a mobility era which encompasses the movement of people, capital, goods, and ideas. The Editor, the Manager of the North Karelian Chamber of Commerce, representatives of the Regional Council of North Karelia, professors and researchers argue that mobility is necessary, especially if the region aims to

survive in the internationalized world. For example, one reference to the United States argues that "*the more diverse a region is, the more potential there is for new innovation and growth*" (*Karjalainen* 2014, p. 19). Researchers, immigrant representatives (who are often academics), the local Joensuu District Multicultural Association that represents people from various backgrounds, and the Editor present multiculturality as a valuable resource which enriches the region and makes it more attractive for people and businesses (*Karjalainen, 2012a*, p. 17; *Karjalainen, 2013b*, p. 16; *Karjalainen, 2014b*, p. 2). The commentators highlight the role of international students and academics who increase the knowledge, expertize, and social capital of the region. Clearly, by stressing the positive impact of cultural and ethnic diversity, the perspectives of the academic immigrants talking in the newspaper introduce a new facet to the discussion about vitality.

Wellbeing of Immigrants Generates Wellbeing for the Region

Whereas in most texts immigrants are valued primarily for contributing to the region's economy and the material conditions of the native population, a minority of articles see immigrants as having potential for promoting regional or local resilience, if they are included and integrated in Finnish society. The local Multicultural Association, immigration authorities, researchers, and individual citizens emphasize that immigrants are "*already a natural part of the street view*" (*Karjalainen* 2011a, p. 4). They are, however, worried about the hostile attitudes that immigrants encounter. "*A civilized country should not treat immigrants as strangers*", argues a civic society actor, "*we need immigrants to build the Finnish society*" (*Karjalainen* 2011a, p. 4). The Editor pays particular attention to highly educated immigrants who end up leaving the region because they are discriminated against in the labor markets: "*Do we let immigrants find their place in society? There are well-educated immigrants who have lived here a long time, and we keep on treating them as outsiders*" (*Karjalainen* 2013c, p. 2). Experts fear a brain-drain and an exodus of second-generation immigrants, as better job opportunities and a more tolerant atmosphere elsewhere may tempt them to move out of the region.

Interpretation of the Findings

The central finding of the newspaper material analysis is that the "elite" of North Karelia mainly understands the significance of immigration in a narrow sense, as an input to the region's economy, rather than in terms of increasing cultural and ethnic diversity (see also Søholt et al., 2018). Immigrants are supposed to be "targeted" labor migrants who boost the economy and service production, and thereby improve the material conditions of the *native Finnish population* (see Könönen 2015). In line with findings in other European countries, labor migration is supported as it helps to maintain the welfare of the citizens of European welfare states (e.g., Bommes 2012). Few commentators criticize this narrow economy-based approach and argue for the need to understand immigrants in a broader role as a natural part of the region's diverse population and included members of communities. Overall, the key actors of

North Karelia talk about immigrants as inputs to the region's vitality rather than as equal co-producers of local resilience which benefits immigrants as well as the native population. With the exception of the representatives of the local Multicultural Association, immigrants themselves do not participate in the newspaper discussions, which suggests that immigrants are outsiders in the discussion of the vitality of the region, where they live their everyday lives.

Findings: Interview Material
"Being at Home" on Both Sides of the Border

Russian-speaking immigrants have come to eastern Finnish rural areas predominantly as wife-migrants or so called return migrants (Soviet and Russian citizens of Finnish origin who during 1991–2016 had the right to move to Finland on the basis of their ethnicity: see Davydova, 2009). Most of the informants of our study had moved to North Karelia from the adjacent Russian Republic of Karelia, or other nearby areas of Russia. Women of Russian origin are the most common foreign-born wives of Finnish men, and especially common in this region. The marriage-based immigration channel is based on the intensive and short-distance travels to the Russian side of the border by Finnish men who live in the border areas. Russian-Finnish relationships and marriages occur typically between persons who live close to the border, and eventually affect broader kin and friendship networks.

As another category of immigrants, Soviet and later Russian citizens of Finnish descent have traditionally lived in Russian territories close to Finland, and their migration to Finland also involves broader families and friendships. So, the immigration of Russian-speakers to Eastern Finnish rural localities is conditioned by available migration channels and already existing *trans*-local patterns and networks. Subsequently, this immigration strengthens and expands already existing networks, and contributes to the formation of further migration chains. When viewed overall, it can be said that these cross-border connections form a sense of "being at home" among Russian-speaking dwellers in Finnish border areas. This is manifested in the following interview excerpt:

> Interviewer: How is the proximity of the border manifested in your everyday life? Respondent: Probably through tourists. There are many Russian tourists. Maybe berry pickers in the summer. It feels like being in Russia, because everywhere you can hear the Russian language. There are many people who go to Russia to refuel their cars, probably because here gasoline is much more expensive, almost two times, and it is cheaper there. Maybe the Finns somehow feel their proximity to the border as insecurity, but I don't feel that. I don't notice the border at all - when I cross it, I end up at home, you just drive over and are again at home (laughs) (Informant, born 1961).

According to (Saartenoja 2010, p. 27) the way of understanding and experiencing *place* is different for different migrant groups. The relationship with the local place is dependent on the migrants' background, and how easy or difficult it is for migrants to adopt or settle down in rural area in Finland. According to previous studies (e.g., Saartenoja 2010), it seems that if a migrant comes from an urban area or big city, then the silence and emptiness of Finnish rural areas might become a source of anxiety. However, for Russian-speaking migrants, Eastern Finnish rural areas form a suitable and comfortable place to settle because of their proximity to the border and their places of origin. Here they can effectively maintain transnational connections. In the following excerpt, the informant tells about her transnational way of life:

> Interviewer: What is Russia for you? Respondent: Russia is everything to me. My children live there, my parents live there, I was born there. And my husband and I bought a house very close to the border, we go there every week, we have an apartment there in Sortavala, where I come from (Woman, born 1955).

Saartenoja (2010) points out that marriage helps one to adopt to local conditions, even in terms of living in rural areas. In Finnish rural areas, most of the migrants are women, and many are married with Finnish husbands. For example, in the Kainuu region there are 30% more migrant women than migrant men. For wife migrants, it is easier to settle down in rural areas than for other migrants because they have their family as a support network and marriage also gives them higher status (Saartenoja 2010, p. 30–31). Additionally, marriage with a Finnish man can mean a better economic position, in terms of owning a property. Marriage can also help people to access social and health services and get jobs, especially if the husband is an entrepreneur whose business is connected with Russia (see also Saartenoja 2010, p. 30–31). In the following excerpt, the informant describes her husband as being "too good", and also her attachment to the border region:

Respondent: Just a very good person for me - too good (laughs). In my youth, the fortuneteller guessed that my life would change after 45. And it seems to be true. I also have real estate here. I have such a husband. Such an honest, decent person, he shares half of everything with me (laughs). Although this rarely happens here.

> Interviewer: Would you like to live somewhere else? Maybe there is some other city here in Finland? Respondent: Of course. But we now live here, and travel to the border. We have moved many times. We started to live in Tohmajärvi, then moved to Joensuu. We lived there for 5 years because he had a job there. And I studied there at the University. And then, my husband says: I have a pension, I'm so tired of the city, let's go closer to the lake, fishing and hunting. We bought a house. And now he is renovating it, improving it, building everything. Of course, I wanted to be in the city, but no problem, we have a car and he can drive me there (Woman, born 1955).

It can be concluded that the integration of Russian-speaking female immigrants into Finnish border areas happens predominantly due to a close proximity to the check point on the border, which reciprocally enables their transnational ties. In immigrants' everyday lives, the sense of "being at home" raises from the possibility to smoothly combine "old" and "new" places. This aspect seems to be lacking in the newspaper discourse.

Russian Speakers Advance Resilience and Vitality of Border Regions

The majority of Russian-speakers moving to rural areas experience difficulties in finding jobs. Employment courses for immigrants organized by public authorities seem to be an essential channel through which to get a job, to form networks with other immigrants, and which form a considerable part of their precarious everyday lives. The most probable employment can be found in services aimed at Russian tourists, but which involve short-term and part-time employment periods. Nevertheless, when combined with lower expenses, possibilities for picking berries and mushrooms, hunting and growing their own vegetables, and buying cheaper goods in Russia, it provides many immigrants with an opportunity for a relatively satisfactory economic well-being. In the interviews, people present themselves as active actors who search for and find jobs despite the obstacles connected with rurality, and creatively use the opportunities of living in the countryside.

> Interviewer: Would you like to live somewhere else? Respondent: No, I like Finland. I would not want to live anywhere else. I like Finland, I have many friends here, I already have a lot of connections with Finland. I told you, not only am I a fisherwoman, I am a hunter. Interviewer: So you have a gun? Respondent: I shoot hares that foolishly run out at me. It was my Finnish husband who implanted this in me, such a love for all of this. I lived in the middle of the forest, and there were no other hobbies. There, you had to either accept his hobbies, or stay at home. But since I cannot sit at home, the first course I took in Finland was to get a hunting ticket. With three big dictionaries, I passed the exam (Woman, born 1960).

According to our ethnographic study it is clear that Russian immigrant women also have close relationships with Finnish speaking local dwellers in the Tohmajärvi border region. Local people see the Russian speakers as benefiting local everyday life, and also the economic life of the region. Russian speakers can also be good news for the service sector because of their language and social skills. This resonates with the viewpoints presented in the newspaper material.

The trump card of Russian-speakers on the local labor market is their ethno-cultural capital which consists of their native proficiency in the Russian language, their cultural knowledge, and their local and *trans*-local social networks (see Könönen 2011; Davydova 2012). The development strategy of the municipality of Tohmajärvi (Municipal Strategy Action Plan, 2020) highlights several activities related to the border and Russia as being a strength of the municipality, which also means job opportunities for local Russian-speakers. According to our data and previous research, it can be noticed that the most likely jobs can be found either in grocery stores, private nursing homes, as an interpreter, a language teacher, or in tourism-related activities. The ethno-cultural capital of migrants can be utilized to serve both Russian-speaking local dwellers and Russian-speaking border crossers, and is also useful for cross-border economic activities. Martin et al. (2013), p. 52 consider that from the point of view of the export industry, the language skills of immigrants may be an advantage for companies and promote their exports. In Finnish-Russian border areas, migrants' ethno-cultural capital benefits both the regional vitality, and also the immigrants' welfare. Here, a Russian-speaking immigrant woman describes her job as the hostess of a holiday village in North Karelia:

> Respondent: The Russian language is my bread for me - it feeds me now, one might say. If I didn't know Russian, I wouldn't work here. I have been working here for nine years. When I came here to work, we had three ladies here: two Finns and me. For some reason, in the end, only I remained. You have more clients with Russian language, since we are close to the border. And everyone who comes asks right away: where is She? But I get tired more than anyone else, because I need to speak in both languages, in one, in the other, and in a third language (Woman, born 1962).

It can therefore be concluded that the transnational networks formed by immigration benefit regional development, local business life and entrepreneurs not only by providing them with the ethno-cultural capital of immigrants, but also by attracting more clients from both the Russian and Finnish sides of the border, thus enhancing vitality and resilience of the border region.

Russian Speaking Women as a Demographic and Care Resource

"Keeping rural areas alive" entails not only an involvement in production, but also in re-production. Many of our interviewees have children who were either born in Finland or who come from previous marriages in Russia. In Finnish rural localities, these children attend schools, and use other public and private services. So, immigrant women can be seen as a demographic resource for shrinking rural regions. Even if the local media discussion (see *Karjalainen*) does not recognize migrant women as a deliverance, on the everyday level, their presence provides at least a plaster for rural vitality.

> Interviewer: What do you think the concept of the welfare state means? Respondent: A state that can and wants to provide for those who can no longer provide for themselves. These are children, old people. Naturally, the welfare state cannot function without the people who work for this state. I don't blame Finland for high taxes, I pay them and don't cry, because I understand that no old man will be abandoned because of these taxes, and my child goes

to a free school, and he gets free meal there, and he studies in good conditions, in a safe environment. Education has been provided for him, and if anything happens, we will get to a hospital and so on. It is such a mutual responsibility–a worker who can work, must work for the state, helping the state. In turn, the state will help those people who need help.

Interviewer: Do you use such services? Respondent: Yes, health care, school, naturally.

Interviewer: Are they far or close to the place where you live? Respondent: Close. Everything is absolutely accessible. Interviewer: Which of these services do you consider the most important? Respondent: Probably education and health services. I would put them side by side, because both are very important for a person (Woman, born 1979).

At the same time, from the point of view of demographic development in remote rural areas, Russian-speaking immigrant women are a valuable resource for the region's care labor market, which needs precarious care labor to look after the region's aging population (see Jokinen and Jakonen 2011; Könönen 2011). In Tohmajärvi, the provision of care has shifted from the public sector to private business, which needs a flexible, low-paid labor force. In addition, as there are Russian-speakers of all ages in Finland and some are already in need of care services, the ethno-cultural capital of migrants is needed, and might become a key asset in care workplaces in the future.

Russian-speaking immigrant women participate in both formal (paid) and informal family care. They have family members in both Finland and Russia, and have care duties and obligations in both countries. In Russian migrant women's lives, transnationalism means large array of practices ranging from media consumption to care relationships (Pöllänen and Davydova-Minguet 2017; Davydova-Minguet et al., 2019).

Interviewer: How has your life changed after moving to Finland? Respondent: The first years were hard, because they were there, and I was here. But I went there every week - I still drive, and I continue to drive there. At first I earned money, I was a breadwinner for a family [but it was] so fragmented: children in one place, mother in the other. My heart was divided into two parts. One part in Russia, and the other in Finland. So I live, half of me here, half there. <. . .> And about my mother. It is now difficult even to bring her to Finland, because she is Ukrainian and can get a visa only in Kiev. And my mother is very sick, she cannot go to Kiev, especially not to wait for a visa. Therefore, my mother cannot come here (Woman, born 1960).

It seems that care has a significant role in the everyday lives of Russian immigrant women. Contrary to the newspaper discourse which anticipates immigrants as a care resource in formal institutional care, family care is central in the everyday lives of the interviewed women. However, family care is also essential in enhancing the resilience of the border region, as women are responsible for the care of their parents and parents-in-law, as well as the members of their extended families on both sides of the border. Thus, the transnational dimension of migrants' care is of high importance for both themselves and their families (See also Pöllänen and Davydova-Minguet 2017).

DISCUSSION

In the present study, we explored the interpretations of the role of immigration in enhancing the vitality of the Finnish-Russian border region of North Karelia, which has had relatively little experience of international migrants. We investigated how the impact of immigration is presented in the regional *Karjalainen* newspaper, and how the vitality of the border region can be perceived through the interviews of female Russian immigrants. The interview material was analyzed through the prism of rural vitality policy, which stresses the unique resources of a place and calls for a holistic and inclusive approach to rural development (Makkonen and Kahila 2020). We were interested in whether immigrants are valued only as contributors to economic development in regional media (as they tend to be in remote rural environments in many countries), or whether they are presented in more broader roles as co-producers of local resilience (see Søholt et al., 2018). Furthermore, our thinking was guided by the aspiration to combine both integrationalist and transnationalist perspectives on immigrants' lives and processes associated with migration. Notably, the integrationalist stance has dominated Finnish research and media conversation on immigration, yet in the 2000s, the societal consensus on immigration has shifted from the promotion of ethnic and humanitarian immigration, toward advancing labor migration (see Lepola 2000; Könönen 2015).

The same stance can be identified in the regional media, where the key actors of the region argue from a narrow perspective of "targeted labor migration" that would help to fill jobs and maintain businesses in remote areas. This media discussion about immigrants as a mobile labor force that boosts the poor population figures, lacks the idea of immigrants as members of communities who contribute to the regional and local resilience. The lived experiences and narratives of immigrants show that they see this differently. Similarly, in most newspaper comments concerning the role of immigration in the internationalization and multiculturality of the region, immigrants are seen as a resource which makes the region more attractive for people and businesses. However, against expectations, the newspaper discussions in this new immigration destination also include comments, mainly from the university personnel and educated immigrants themselves who represent the local Multicultural Association, which stress the cultural and ethnic diversity of migrants as a positive phenomenon, not only in terms of improving the economy and material conditions of the native population. In some comments, immigrants are seen as a natural part of the region's population who diversify the skills and capacities of communities, and thus form potential for

promoting regional or local resilience. Yet, the Russian immigrant women themselves living in rural localities do not participate in the discussion about the vitality of rural communities, which indicates that they are not fully recognized as contributors of resilience in North Karelia. Furthermore, Russian women remain "invisible" in the discussion on rural development.

As a further observation, the majority of immigrants who have settled down in the North Karelian countryside have arrived through other migration channels, such as family ties or marriage migration, the re-migration of persons of Finnish ethnic background, and through humanitarian migration. For these migrants, their integration into the labor market and local communities differs from the idealized pattern of labor migration, where migrants are expected to fill existing vacant positions, e.g., in farms or IT-companies. The analysis of the data shows that for Russian immigrant women, the rural border area of North Karelia forms a livable environment, where the closeness of the border enables women's participation in the local precarious labor market. The jobs that women end up doing are usually not those which suffer from labor shortages, but are often based on women's ethno-cultural knowledge and their networks. The interview data also shows that in rural areas, internationalization mostly occurs on the level of lived everyday lives, and especially in border localities it is based on transnational connections. Mastering the Russian language and culture has become an asset for those who speak Finnish fluently, and can be utilized by them in service or business sectors. For many though, the Russian language can restrict their possibilities and contacts with the Finnish speaking local population. Although multiculturality is often presented as an asset in official statements in public discussion, a lived multiculturality can have many more dimensions. The interviewed women emphasize their multilevel connections to the region where they live, and these include family and friendship relations which tie them to places on both sides of the border. Thus, the proximity of the border and the ease of its crossing forms an important factor that attaches them to these rural places.

On the basis of our interview data, it can be argued that the narrow understanding of integration as simply acquiring Finnish language skills and participation in the labor market which is characteristic of the administrative use of this concept, does not meet immigrant women's own experiences of "being at home" in the border region. Furthermore, it seems that the easier the maintenance of transnational ties is, the smoother the integration process is, which in turn boosts the vitality and resilience of the region.

In this article, we have combined two approaches of rural studies and migration studies in order to investigate the role of immigration in rural development on the Finnish-Russian border. Our findings are in line with previous research in rural studies, namely that immigration is mainly understood as an asset to rural locations which suffer from a labor shortage, population decline and aging. This is the way that immigration

has been approached and conceptualized in previous research (e.g., Rye and Holm Slettebak 2020; Kasimis et al., 2010) and how it is perceived in the regional newspaper in North Karelia. However, our study has demonstrated that in the context of proximity and neighborhood with the places of origin of migrants, their patterns of migration do not fully coincide with the expectations concerning their impact on the rural labor market. In these circumstances, the vitality of the rural border region should be approached from a more holistic and transnational perspective (e.g., Flynn and Kay 2017; Assmuth et al., 2018). The migrants' attachment and commitment to the region should be seen as an important resource for the vitality and resilience of the rural region. This needs to be acknowledged in terms of broadening the official discourse on immigration, as well as the policies of integration and inclusion.

However, the context of the Finnish-Russian border is distinctive and creates factors that impact on the transnational realities of immigrants and local population. The geopolitical tensions between Russia and the EU, the growing mistrust toward Russia in Finland, and Russia's mediatized identity politics create feelings of being "between the devil and the deep blue see" in Russian-speaking immigrants living in Finland (Oivo and Davydova-Minguet 2019). Consequently, this overall tensed situation and its impact on rural vitality and resilience prompts a need for further research.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. Written informed consent for participation was not required for this study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

MS is the corresponding author and the first author. MS is responsible for the media analysis. PP and OD-M are responsible for the analysis of the ethnographic part of the study.

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